The Intimate Practice of Self-knowing in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*

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A Thesis
presented to
The University of Guelph

In partial fulfilment of requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Philosophy

Guelph, Ontario, Canada

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Abstract

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The following work will be an examination of self-knowledge in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. My main thesis is that self-knowledge is a practical, intersubjective phenomenon. This means that the sense we have of ourselves and our ability to live with a practical understanding of ourselves is an achievement that requires the participation of others. Each chapter will develop my thesis by highlighting the intersubjective character of the nature of the self and the structure of self-knowledge. I do this by analyzing self-consciousness as such, our ability to know others and for others to know us, and the nature of the “inner” self. After having given what I take to be Hegel’s argument concerning the self and self-knowledge, I present an argument taken from Hegel’s texts regarding the practical implications of his discourse on self-knowledge. I conclude that properly recognizing the nature of self-knowledge will lead one to more fully participate in the conditions under which self-knowing occurs.
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Any action that we undertake requires that we make a claim about who we are. If I am going to do something that I want to do, and act in a way that I want to, I am required to have some kind of understanding of who this “I” is. This means that in order to determine what kinds of desires and plans are appropriate for me, I must first have a sense of who this person is. This can be done implicitly or explicitly, and my actions can arise out of understanding of who I already am, or I can act because I am driving towards becoming a certain kind of person that I have decided I would like to become. In either case, in order to navigate my life, I have to decide who it is that I take myself to be. Thus, the experience that I have of myself requires that I concern myself, at least implicitly, with coming to know myself. Consequently, a search for self-knowledge arises from within the experience I have of navigating my life and, since navigating my life is something that I am required to do, the search for self-knowledge presents itself to me as an imperative.

An explicit imperative to “know thyself” is as old as western philosophy, as these words were inscribed upon the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. In Plato’s “Apology,” Socrates explains how he began his life’s mission to know himself. A friend of his, Chaerephon, went to the oracle at Delphi and asked if anyone was wiser than Socrates, to which the priestess replied that no man was wiser. Socrates did not immediately accept that what was being asserted about himself was
true because it conflicted with his experience. According to Socrates, this sent him out on a life-long quest to know himself and to know if this was true. So, feeling the tension between an assertion made about him and his experience of himself, Socrates went out to discover the truth about himself. It is worth noting, as this will focus the reader to the direction of the following work, that Socrates did not look “inside himself” in order to discover the truth about himself. He could have heard this information and then taken a walk outside the city in order to engage in solitary contemplation, thinking about his wisdom in relation to others. However, Socrates did not turn inward; instead, he turned outward and questioned others. It was through his dialogue with others that his he comes to have a sense for who he was.

In Plato’s “Apology,” the imperative to self-knowledge comes externally, as information passed on to Socrates through Chaerephon. Yet, this quest becomes an imperative because within the experience Socrates has of himself, he feels a tension and becomes aware of a problem to be worked out. In the beginning to his *Philosophy of Mind*, Hegel gives his interpretation of the inscription on the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. Hegel says that this imperative is not about the “particular capacities, character, propensities, and foibles of the single self.” What we are concerned with is “essentially and ultimately true and real.” Hegel tells us, discussing the inscription at Delphi, that “the god who impels to self-knowledge is none other than the absolute law of mind itself.” For Hegel, the imperative to “know thyself” is not an imperative sent from beyond. The imperative to self-knowledge is found within my own experience.

Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* is a book which deals with knowledge arising out of experience. Hegel begins by studying the simplest experience a conscious being could have in its

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1 The word for “mind” here is “*Geist*,” which will be discussed below.
3 Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §377.
attempts to know what is appearing to it in its experience. Taking this simple and immediate form of experience as his starting point, Hegel shows that attending to one’s experience will refine one’s experience and allow one to recognize the true character of one’s experience of oneself and the world. What Hegel aims to show is that by following the experience of consciousness from its most immediate form we will better understand what it means to know. By following this development, we, the readers of the Phenomenology, can see the conditions that make experience possible to a greater and greater extent. This work is a “phenomenology” because he takes experience to be the ultimate authority with respect to one’s knowledge of what appears.

Hegel justifies his method in the “Introduction.” After explaining that his Phenomenology will try to understand what it means to know, he discusses whether or not we should be mistrustful of our own ability to know before taking account of cognition as the tool or “medium” through which we know. He says that many begin a discussion of knowing with the skepticism that we, as human knowers, will always have a deficient access to the world because our cognition will always only give us a certain view on reality. This worry results in a kind of skepticism concerning the possibility of knowing. Hegel says this stance is not rigorous enough because it already presupposes we know something about knowing and what is involved in it. Namely, it “assumes that there is a difference between ourselves and this cognition” (58/§74). Further, if we suppose that the subject and object of knowing are different, we will have created a gulf between the knower and her knowledge that will never be overcome. We will end up calling all knowledge “subjective.” Hegel’s problem with this is that it presupposes that we have an idea of what knowing is such that we could call it “subjective.” Of words like ‘absolute,’

5 References to the Phenomenology of Spirit will remain in-text. The reader will first see a number corresponding the Meiner edition of the German text followed by the paragraph number from Miller’s translation.
‘cognition,’ ‘objective,’ and ‘subjective,’ Hegel says that “to give the impression that their meaning is generally well known, or that their Notion is comprehended, looks more like an attempt to avoid the main problem, which is precisely to provide this Notion” (59/§76). Since he is attempting to rigorously ground the meaning of these words, he begins with a phenomenological method, which he takes to be presuppositionless insofar as it lets experience show what it has to show without laying a pre-conceived conceptual framework on top of it. Hegel’s approach is thus a more thoroughgoing skepticism because it attempts to understand knowledge without presuming we know anything about knowledge. Accordingly, since he is starting without the presumption that he knows what knowing is before investigating it, he describes his project as “an exposition of how knowledge makes its appearance” (60/§76). Thus, in our investigation of what it means to know, we will begin with the simplest and most immediate experience.

In Hegel’s Phenomenology, knowing is a practical achievement. In this book, the reader follows along as “consciousness,” appearing as the protagonist of the narrative of the book, is lead to learn from its experiences. It may initially seem that this “consciousness” is doing something as we watch along and that we are learning second-hand what “consciousness” learns. However, despite the fact that we the readers are gaining from this experience, the knowledge derived from the examination of the phenomena is not simply derived second-hand, as a third person operation. We as readers are only able to do this observing because these experiences are already on hand for us. As Russon has written, “On must be a participant in this work, not just an

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6 Hyppolite writes that “If knowledge were an instrument, then the “absolute could not be self-knowledge, nor could knowledge be knowledge of the absolute” (Genesis and Structure, 6).
7 Werner Marx gives an argument for Hegel’s method based on the Preface and Introduction to the Phenomenology in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit.
8 As Quentin Lauer has put it, “the ‘phenomena’ being examined is the phenomena of knowing.” Lauer, A Reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit, 13.
observer. To understand and appreciate Hegel’s claims about the experience of ‘now,’ one must oneself have that experience in front of one.”

I, the reader of the *Phenomenology*, must also be a participant in it. If I am to profit from the phenomenology, then phenomenology is something I must do. It is not watched like a movie, with the show of appearances being projected in front of the phenomenological observer to watch. Instead, phenomenology must be practiced.

This practice, furthermore, is one I will call an “intimate practice” because what I will show is that self-knowledge arises out of relationships that define who we take ourselves to be and constitute who we are. In the “Preface,” Hegel speaks more specifically about the form that this knowing will take. In the preface, Hegel claims one of the goals of the book is to achieve “pure self-recognition in absolute otherness” (19/§26). The education of consciousness, if it is engaged in rigorously through Hegel’s phenomenological method, will show how consciousness, through the mediation of another, comes “face-to-face” with itself. Consciousness will come up against itself as an object of consciousness. In other words, the education of consciousness, through the phenomenological description of experience, will turn into an experience of itself, self-consciousness. Not only will we come face-to-face with ourselves when understanding knowing, we will see ourselves in what is most alien to us, what is “absolutely other.” This self-conscious engagement with the objects of knowledge is the ground of “*knowledge in general*” for Hegel. An important feature of Hegel’s argument here, one that will be my main focus throughout the following thesis, is that what makes *self*-knowledge possible, in his text, is a self-recognition in the otherness of another person. Since self-knowledge will be shown to be dependent on others, I will describe this phenomenological practice to be an intimate practice of self-knowing.

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9 Russon, “The Project of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit,*” 49.
Hegel also describes “pure self-recognition in absolute otherness” as “the very substance of spirit” (20/§26). Spirit, as we will learn, is what experience finds to be most fundamental in the phenomenological education consciousness undergoes. Spirit is what truly appears as more fundamental than all preceding ways of experiencing the world.¹⁰ Hegel’s book is a phenomenology of spirit because he takes spirit to be the most concrete phenomenon in which knowing could take place. We have already seen that Hegel’s investigation into knowing will take the form of a phenomenology of one’s own self through one’s own mind. The mind Hegel will find is “Geist.”

*Geist* is a technical term for Hegel. While it is usually translated as “spirit” in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Geist* also means “mind,” since it refers to an individual, “interior” capacity for thinking and self-consciously relating to one’s experiences.¹¹ While if one has to choose between the two terms, spirit is the better term because, as we will see, what is involved in “mind” is more than something simply inside my head. However, if we were to hold onto just one of these understandings of *Geist*, we would fail to grasp the reason Hegel did not begin the investigation into knowing by presuming a division between mind and world. What we will see is that experience begins to show its understanding of what knowing is when it begins to see the intersubjective world in which knowing takes place. In this sense, *Geist* is properly understood as “spirit,” when spirit is understood as the social fabric of reality. Understanding *Geist* as “spirit” will show how the most concrete position from which we can understand knowing will be from the intersubjective world that knows itself as articulating reality. Understanding *Geist* as “mind” allows one to see that when Hegel talks about doing a phenomenology of spirit, he is not only

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¹⁰ Hegel says that “all previous shapes of consciousness are abstract forms of it (289/§440).
talking about the intersubjective, social world captured in Chapter 6 of the *Phenomenology*, he is also talking about doing a phenomenology of one’s own mind.

One of the main lessons is that one’s own mind, the capacity that one has to understand the world and one’s place in it, can only be understood concretely if it is understood as the mind one grows up into. The spirit of Chapter 6 is found to be the fundamental ground for one’s mind. *Spirit* in Chapter 6 is broken down into different “shapes of spirit.” A “shape of spirit” is the way a given world has articulated itself. When Hegel analyzes shapes of spirit he is analyzing different ways that a group of people understand themselves. These shapes of spirit are found to be what is most fundamental, and thus Hegel’s phenomenology is ultimately found to be a phenomenology of spirit. As Pinkard writes of a shape of spirit, “it is more basic than the kind of subject-object split that is fundamental to each shape of consciousness; instead, a shape of spirit forms the attunements in terms of which those distinctions between subject and object are drawn in the first place.”¹² As each chapter of the following work unfolds, the reader will get further and further into the story of how knowing one’s own mind is knowing one’s mind to be “spirit.”

The following work will be an examination of Hegel’s account of self-knowledge in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. My main aim will be to show, by selecting a number of sections from Hegel’s text, how Hegel’s philosophy implies that self-knowledge is an intersubjective and practical phenomenon. Thus, my main aim will be to contribute to the understanding of the role of self-knowledge in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. I will do this by weaving together my interpretations of different sections of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* that are especially pertinent to the theme of self-knowledge. I will highlight and develop my interpretations by referring to other Hegel scholars, by drawing on other texts from Hegel’s corpus, mostly the *Lectures on the*

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¹² Pinkard, “What is a Shape of Spirit,” 114.
History of Philosophy, Philosophy of Right, and from other philosophical texts, like those from Plato for example. In the end, I will show the practical implications of Hegel’s account of self-knowledge.

Throughout my argument, I will be engaging in several debates in Hegel scholarship and interpretation. Though responding to these debates is not the explicit aim of my thesis, I will nevertheless be challenging several criticisms of Hegel’s philosophy. I will briefly outline here two of the main criticisms of Hegel that I aim to challenge in what follows. I highlight these two here because, while they are dealt with throughout the work, they do not receive explicit, sustained treatment within the body of the text.

There is a charge, associated with Derrida, that Hegel’s philosophy is a “philosophy of presence.” In his essay on Derrida’s reading of Hegel in Glas, Critchley describes this as being a philosophy “where self-consciousness is presented with the Absolute as an object of cognition.”13 Leonard Lawlor explains this theme of the philosophy of presence as follows: “For Derrida, the idea of presence implies self-givenness, simplicity, purity, identity, and stasis. Therefore, deconstruction aims to demonstrate that presence is never given as such, never simple, never pure, never self-identical, and never static; it is always given as something other, complex, impure, differentiated, and generated.”14 This charge against Hegel will be taken up primarily in my discussion of the Unhappy Consciousness in Part One of Chapter Three. However, what I am arguing here is that when self-consciousness becomes an object of philosophical cognition, one is oriented towards the absence, the elusive universal character of

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13 Critchley, “A Commentary Upon Derrida’s Reading of Hegel in Glas” in Hegel After Derrida. See also §788. Similarly, in “Hegel, Derrida and the Subject,” Lumsden writes that “It is the discourse of mastery, identity, and self-knowledge against which Derrida defines his project, terms that have been most often associated in his writing with Hegel’s thought” (205).
14 Lawlor, “Deconstruction” in Routledge Companion to Phenomenology, 509.
oneself. Thus, what is “present” to consciousness is the fact of the elusive nature of self-consciousness, and not what is elusive in terms of the particular content of self-consciousness. The Unhappy Consciousness, and, as I will argue in Chapter Three, confession and forgiveness, are precisely forms of experience that recognize a non-self-identity with what is.

Another charge that the reader of Hegel faces is that his philosophy is Eurocentric. This charge is particularly directed against Hegel’s philosophy of history. I do not dispute the well-documented racism and eurocentrism that is present in Hegel’s philosophy of history. Though I am not dealing with Hegel’s philosophy of history, one can also see how one might direct this charge against the Phenomenology of Spirit as well. While Hegel claims to be giving a science of the experience of consciousness, much of the text is rooted in examples from the western tradition. This includes a focus on themes in western philosophy, extensive examples from Ancient Greece, as well as examples from the sciences or pseudo-sciences of his own time. Given that many of these examples represent forms of experiences that are either dated or seemingly inaccessible to most readers today, one might wonder about the extent to which the reader can herself truly follow the phenomenological descriptions, or, even if she could, why she would think that these descriptions relate to anything except for the dated context of many of Hegel’s examples. Certain aspects of Hegel’s Phenomenology may rightly be dated, or reflect a euro-chauvinism in its presentation; however, my guiding hypothesis in working with the text is to look for the more general logic of experience that Hegel is presenting. I do this because if the reader does not have the ability to relate to the text through a phenomenological first-person

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15 Bernasconi’s work has most clearly demonstrated the ways in which Hegel has chosen and distorted the literature concerning Africa. See “Hegel at the Court of the Ashanti” and “With what must the philosophy of world history begin? On the racial basis of Hegel’s eurocentrism.” See also Tibebu, Hegel and the Third World: The Making of Eurocentrism in World History.
perspective, she cannot properly relate to the experiences whose logic Hegel is attempting to show. I take Hegel’s claim, that he is presenting a science of the experience of consciousness as such, seriously, and, in accordance with this, I take the examples he uses of certain phenomena to be just that, examples of some more general form of experience. To this end, my reading of the text aims to show the more general logic of experience that is at play in the *Phenomenology* by presenting what I take to be analogous examples that the reader today can relate to more easily, and, additionally, that help me to draw out the theme of self-knowledge. This is done, to some extent, in each chapter, but this is one of the primary aims of my reading of Hegel in Chapters One, Two, and Four. The reader will see my attempt to move beyond the immediate examples to the more general logic of recognition in my treatment of Lordship and Bondage, Phrenology, and marriage.

Chapter One begins my argument for understanding self-knowledge as an intersubjective practice by looking at the nature of the self in the *Phenomenology*. In this chapter, I will focus on the origin of self-consciousness in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*. According to the analysis Hegel gives in his *Phenomenology*, self-consciousness originates as a struggle for independence and recognition, which is portrayed in the first section of his chapter on self-consciousness, called “Independence and Dependence of Self-consciousness: Lordship and Bondage.” In my reading of this section, I will stress the extent to which self-consciousness is an intersubjective achievement that depends upon one’s relationships with others. What we will see in this chapter is that self-knowledge changes the very nature of the self, or, more exactly, makes possible a

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16 Similarly, Buchwalter, in an essay on Hegel’s philosophy of history, writes, “I shall not dispute the presence of a centrally Western or even Eurocentric focus to Hegel’s conception of history. Nor do I deny that his writings on history may exhibit a certain Eurochavanism and what has been called ‘a certain prejudice against non-European cultures.’ What I do challenge is the assumption that Hegel’s idea or ‘logic’ of world history is itself Eurocentric” (87). See “Is Hegel’s Philosophy of History Eurocenric?”
“self” in the first place. Self-knowledge is not an accumulation of indifferent knowledge-stuff which is added on to an already existing self; instead, self-knowledge is the condition for the possibility of experiencing oneself as a self and, consequently, a change in self-knowledge is a change the nature of the very being acquiring this knowledge. Since, as I will argue, self-knowledge and the self arise out of an engagement with another, self-knowledge and self-hood are an achievement. They come about through a practical relationship with an other. Seeing how the origin of self-consciousness arises out of what I will argue is an intimate relationship helps us to see the fundamental role that another plays in the formation of self-consciousness.

Chapter Two looks at the apparent immediate access we have to the “inner self” of ourselves or others. With respect to ourselves, we may think that we have the ability to relate to ourselves in an immediate way. I know who I am on the “inside,” I may claim, without the need to appeal to anything “outside” of me. On the basis of this presumed immediacy, we take ourselves to have a privileged access to knowing who we are as persons. Initially, our experience of ourselves suggests that we are simply equipped with this capacity. With respect to others, we posit ways in which we can interpret their “inner” through the outer appearances with which we have access. This second chapter will offer a critique of this position through an analysis, first of Stoicism, and then of two sections of Hegel’s chapter on reason. The first section, on Stoicism, will provide the basic logic of self-consciousness that is being drawn upon in Hegel’s chapter on reason. In the second section, I will consider is “Observation of the relation of self-consciousness to its immediate actuality: physiognomy and phrenology.” Here, Hegel looks at how an observer relates to her observations and he looks specifically at the sciences of physiognomy and phrenology because they attempt to know the “inner” of a person through observation of their “outer” appearance. I use this section to investigate the theme of how we have access to others.
In the third section, I will analyze Hegel’s third and final section of his chapter on reason, titled “The spiritual realm of animals and deception, or the thing itself.” Here, Hegel analyzes an attitude which he calls the “real individual,” which is an attitude of knowing that takes itself to have immediate access to itself. For an individual construed in this way, interpersonal communication is a superfluous endeavor for self-knowledge. This “real individual” only takes *intrapersonal* communication to be required. While the first section I discuss is used as an analysis of listening, this second section looks at speaking or self-expression to see to what extent these are required for self-knowledge. What we will see is that these positions fail to properly recognize the intersubjective setting for self-knowledge. I do this by arguing that in order to account for our sense of our “inner selves” we have to see them in dialogue with exteriority. Through an examination of interiority from the position of a speaker and a listener, I show how each position remains deficient until we show the more fundamental interplay between the two.

Chapter Three continues a critique of the presumption of privileged access that we often take ourselves to have to ourselves by looking at the nature of the “inner being” of the self. This chapter deepens the insight that our innermost self is fundamentally intersubjective, and not simply “our own,” by drawing on the idea that it is in our experience of morality, and specifically the experience of conscience, that we experience our innermost sense of who we are. This is seen in his discussion of conscience as a form of morality. In the experience of conscience we find within ourselves an undeniable affirmation for who we *must* be. What Hegel’s analysis of this experience shows is that for Hegel, even this experience of seemingly irreducible interiority reveals an exteriority at play within our innermost interiority. This chapter has two parts, the first is concerned with knowing and second with acting. The first part shows
this elusive nature of our innermost being by focusing on Hegel’s figure of the “unhappy consciousness.” This is a figure that finds its most essential being to be found in a beyond. While this section is found in Hegel’s discussion of self-consciousness and is followed and surpassed by many other developments in his argument, I will argue that the figure of the unhappy consciousness persists throughout Hegel’s analysis of experience and resurfaces in the final logical development in his argument with confession and forgiveness. I do this by comparing the three figures for what Hegel’s calls “the freedom of self-consciousness” (stoic, skeptic, unhappy consciousness) with three figures from Hegel’s analysis of morality (beautiful soul, judging consciousness, conscience as confession). A basic tension that I highlight in this section is between what I call the “impersonal” and “personal” dimensions of ourselves. The “impersonal” dimension originates in the basic stance of self-consciousness, which takes itself to be an infinite possibility for thinking that is not reducible to finite particularities. The “personal” dimension of ourselves encompasses the ways in which we experience ourselves as concretely acting out of particular desires and circumstances. The second part of this chapter, concerned with action, stresses the “personal” dimension of our experience by looking at the role of contingency in action. I do this by comparing the figure of the oracle, Socrates’ daimon, and conscience. What I aim to show is that, while these three figures are distinct, recognizing the role of contingency in action allows one to see how all of the figures, for Hegel, still retain an important feature of consulting an oracle because one recognizes that many elements of one’s actions are beyond one’s control. I primarily follow Hegel’s Phenomenology, but I supplement this with substantial discussions from his Lectures on the History of Philosophy.

Chapter Four completes the analysis by studying the practical implications of understanding the self as something that understands itself through others. The first three
chapters show that self-knowledge is an intersubjective, practical achievement. Something is “achievement” because the kind of thing the person making this achievement is changes. In previous chapters, I argue that by focusing on the sites for the occurrence of self-knowledge, we can see that it is a practical achievement of self-identity with others. We learn this by reflecting on our experiences after they happen. We have, thus, two aspects of ourselves that are essential to us. First, we are active, self-possessed being who control their own natures. Second, we are passive beings who find themselves beholden to others. When we recognize that our identities are bound up with others we can turn to participating in and helping to co-create the ground for our own action. As a case study, I look to how we can self-consciously engage in practical acts of self-knowing by looking to Hegel’s account of marriage in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, supplemented with his more extensive discussion of marriage in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. A discussion of marriage in Hegel’s philosophy comes with it a host of problems. Hegel himself discusses marriage in terms of a division and uniting of “man” and “woman,” noting a specific determinacy of each. Also, the institution of marriage itself has a history of discrimination on the basis of wealth, race, and sexual orientation, to name just a few. It has often been used as a way to transfer property, often considering the woman entering into it to be an object of property traded through marriage as a transaction. While these are true problems with the cultural history of marriage, I turn to marriage to address a specific problem with respect to self-knowledge. In Hegel’s philosophy, I will argue, marriage represents the ability for one to choose and cultivate the ground in which knowing will take place. In the initial experiences I examine (of speaking, listening, and conscience, for example), we find that self-knowledge must take “spirit” into account, that is, it must account for a more fundamental level that shapes the context in which self-knowledge could appear. In marriage, Hegel sees an
example of how we can self-consciously engage in a co-creation of the ground that previously appeared to be entirely beyond our grasp. This self-conscious engagement with the grounds of self-knowing allows one to practically recognize the insights drawn from Hegel’s texts in the first three chapters. Accordingly, I conclude that in order to more self-consciously engage in self-knowledge one must take seriously its intersubjective dimension, which means acting out of the recognition that self-knowledge is an intersubjective achievement.
CHAPTER ONE

The Origin of Self-knowledge

Introduction

We will begin our investigation of self-knowledge by looking at the experiential and conceptual origin of the self. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel concentrates on different ways that we can relate to our experience. This begins with three chapters on consciousness, where Hegel analyzes different ways that we relate to something other than or outside of us. His next chapter focuses on self-consciousness, where he analyzes how we relate to ourselves. In this chapter, I will be focusing on the origin of this self-relation.

The origin of this self-relation is described in the first section of his chapter on self-consciousness, entitled “Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage.” Hegel’s claim is: “Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged” (127/§178). What I want to note at this point is that Hegel takes “being acknowledged,” or recognition from another, to be essential to the establishment of self-consciousness. What he means is that a being becomes self-conscious only on the condition that another being has recognized it as such.\(^{17}\) Since one’s

\(^{17}\) For a more detailed description of the “in itself” and “for itself” character of self-consciousness, see Russon’s *The Self and its Body in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*. Russon interprets self-consciousness in terms of life and
relationship to oneself is mediated by another’s recognition, Hegel aims to give an intersubjective account of the origin of self-consciousness.

That Hegel sets out to give an intersubjective account of self-consciousness is generally not in dispute; however, how he does this can be difficult to understand. The problem lies in identifying precisely how self-consciousness arises in the text. Hegel describes the origin of self-consciousness in terms of a confrontation between two beings. Up to this point in the text, each being had the implicit experience of being completely independent. The understanding each has of the world involves not recognizing and excluding others. Each takes its own experience to be essential, but everything else as incidental. As a result, the confrontation of each to the other is a challenge. In this challenge, each being tries to maintain its previous understanding of itself in the face of the other. This means asserting that the other is inessential, while it alone is essential. This results in a “struggle to the death” because each beings “self”-conception requires the other to be incidental. Given the nature of the self-conception of each, they attempt to show that it is the only essential being by staking its life and seeking the death of the other. Maintaining this struggle is impossible because both cannot be the one and only essential being; the position of each contracts the other’s position. Since both of these standpoints cannot be maintained, one of them must qualify its standpoint. Hegel articulates this in terms of one being giving in and becoming what he describes as the “bondsman.” This allows the other to win and become the “lord.” The bondsman is held in subjection by the lord and must work to satisfy the lord’s desire because the lord holds the threat of death over him. Hegel argues that the bondsman gains a sense of himself precisely through working for the lord. His labor is a site for liberation because his labor gives him an experience of himself as independent. Readers of Hegel seem to agree that desire, arguing that “life is desire in itself, and self-consciousness is desire for itself” (54). See chapter three of his book for this analysis.
the bondsman’s self-consciousness arises out of his labor. However, because the bondsman’s advance over the lord is described as arising out of the bondsman’s labor, it is easy to imagine that self-consciousness is an isolated act that is accomplished independent from the lord. This poses a problem, because, if the ability for the bondsman to gain the self-knowledge required for self-consciousness comes independently of the lord, then Hegel has failed to give an account of recognition that is truly intersubjective. In this chapter, I will argue that the bondsman achieves self-consciousness, not because he has stopped relating to the lord and focuses on his relationship to the objects of his labor, but because he has truly started relating to the lord for the first time. Thus, I will conclude, it is only by forming a relationship with the lord that the bondsman is able to form a relationship with himself.18

When one thinks of an intimate relationship, one often conjures up thoughts of the familiarity of home life or the pleasure that can accompany loving relationships or sexual engagements. Hegel’s figures of the lord and bondsman do not immediately call upon these senses of intimacy as caring or loving since the lord and the bondsman have a relationship mediated by the threat of death. However, there is an ambiguity when we speak of a relationship as “intimate.” We say a relationship is “intimate” when it is “Inmost, most inward” and is “connected with the inmost nature or fundamental character of a thing.”19 On the one hand, this refers to the identification of another with oneself, as one from whom one does not distinguish oneself. We can see this sense in the way that we may relate to our families or homes. We treat these as shared spaces, where a shared inner world is established (one might say “this is my home, where we live”). On the other hand, the most intimate can refer to something outside of

18 As Robert Williams has noted, “Contra Kojève, master and slave do not exhaust the possibilities present in the concept of recognition” (67). See, among others, Williams’ Hegel’s Ethics of Recognition on this orientation of the Phenomenology (47), Hyppolite (158/164), and Harris, Hegel’s Ladder: The Pilgrimage of Reason (370).
19 The Oxford English Dictionary. 2nd ed. (OED Online), s.v. “intimate.”
oneself. For example, in his *Confessions*, Augustine speaks of God as “more intimate than the innermost part of me” (*interior intimo meo*). Here, what is most fundamental is a being outside of oneself. In both senses, something is intimate because it is fundamental and “innermost;” yet, in the latter sense, this “innermost” being is something outside of me, a being from whom I distinguish myself.

What we will see is that Hegel’s discussion of lordship and bondage highlights these two senses of intimacy, namely, intimacy as (implicit) identification with another and intimacy as being distinct from another. I describe these relationship as “intimate” in order to stress the fundamental or radical character of their relation. I follow Hegel in stressing this, because he is arguing for the kind of relationship that allows one to relate to oneself as a self at all. The kinds of relationships that are articulated through the figures of the lord and bondsman show these two different ways of being intimately connected to another person. After having shown how these two types of relationships are embodied in Hegel’s text, we will see how they can make possible or close off one’s ability for self-knowledge. I will argue that, from the perspective of the lord, Hegel’s analysis shows that, although the lord is involved in what one might call an implicitly “intimate relationship,” he is unable to recognize his relationship with another and this closes off his ability to achieve self-knowledge. On the other hand, we will see that the bondsman ends up being involved in a very different kind of relationship, one which must still be considered an intimate relationship, but with a very significant difference. The difference is that the bondsman is able to recognize its relationship with another, and it is in recognizing this relationship that the

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21 This conception of “intimacy” has been thematized by Jacques-Alain Miller’s discussion of Lacan’s term *extimité*. See Miller, “*Extimité*.”
22 I will focus on these senses of intimacy in later portions of the dissertation.
bondsman is able to achieve self-knowledge. In the end, I will argue that the latter type of intimate relationship is required for knowing oneself as a self, where there is a fundamental connection between two beings, but nevertheless one confronts the other as another and experiences oneself as distinct from this other.

It is worth pausing here to consider what to make of Hegel’s use of lordship and bondage as the context in which he describes the experiential origin of self-consciousness. “Establishing a relationship” and “intimacy” are not words that are reminiscent of slavery, which is a common way that Hegel’s analysis of lordship and bondage is taken up. In this chapter, I aim to demonstrate the more basic logic of self-consciousness that I take Hegel to be developing. This runs the risk, along with Hegel, of using slavery as a casual example, disconnected from actual slavery. Susan Buck-Morss, in “Hegel and Haiti,” argues that there is a “paradox between the discourse of freedom and the practice of slavery” (822). Specifically, her article details the hypocrisy of enlightenment thinkers would ignore the role of slavery while speaking of the value of freedom. She criticizes enlightenment thinkers for using the metaphor of slavery casually. She traces its use in Locke, Rousseau, and the American Revolution, showing how it was often used to denote people taxed without consent, and not the literal enslavement or ownership of people by other people.

Buck-Morss aims to place Hegel’s account of self-consciousness in concrete discussions of slavery. In fact, she argues that Hegel idea of lordship and bondage and the bondsman’s emancipation comes from Hegel’s understanding of the slave revolt in that was happening in Haiti a few years before Hegel wrote the Phenomenology. After showing how Hegel must have been aware of what was happening in Haiti at the time of writing the Phenomenology, she writes, “We are left with only two alternative. Either Hegel was the blindest of all the blind philosophers
of freedom in Enlightenment Europe, surpassing Locke and Rousseau by far in his ability to block our reality right in front of his nose (the *print* right in front of his nose at the breakfast table); or Hegel knew – knew about real slaves revolting successfully against real masters, and he elaborated his dialectic of lordship and bondage deliberately within this contemporary context” (844). She concludes that Hegel must have used the context of lordship and bondage because the possibility of a slave revolt became clear to him through his knowledge of what was happening in Haiti.

The question that this raises, however, is: how literally are we to take Hegel’s example of lordship and bondage as an example, perhaps, of modern slavery. Buck-Morss believes that we need to take lordship and bondage as a concrete example that can be read through the lens of the Haitian revolution that took place just years before Hegel wrote the *Phenomenology*. I believe that this, however, goes too far and overstates the role of the image of lordship and bondage in Hegel’s text. Hegel’s section on lordship and bondage is, first and foremost, an analysis of the logical origin of the experience of self-consciousness. Here, Hegel argues for the experiential origin of independence through dependence. The image of lordship and bondage, while not to be understated, is nevertheless an image of something, and it is an image or paradigm case of the logic of self-consciousness.

Most importantly, while Hegel’s analysis can likely be applied to slavery, as it can to other aspects of experience, we cannot take Hegel’s account to reflect the concrete conditions of really-existing slavery. For example, Buck-Morss makes the slave plural.  

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23 There is also an issue as to why Hegel’s uses “bondsman” (*Knecht*) instead of slave (*Sklave*). She argues that since he uses slave in other texts, it can be applied to the *Phenomenology* as well. I think this may be too much of a leap, since if Hegel really wanted to talk about concrete slaves, one wonders why he did not just use the word “*Sklave*.”
this: “But then the slaves (again, collectivizing the figure) achieve self-consciousness by demonstrating that they are not things, not objects, but subjects who transform material nature” (848). However, if we are imagining a context in which there is already a social world with others like oneself, we are speaking of a context much more complicated than Hegel’s abstract analysis of self-consciousness. If one has others like oneself around oneself and is in some kind of community, one would already have a sense of oneself as a self. If Hegel had wanted to talk about concrete conditions of slavery, he would have to place this within the chapter on spirit, where he discusses actual social worlds. Thus, while one should not understate the role of fear and terror that Hegel emphasizes through the context of lordship and bondage, my reading of Hegel, and the following argument, aims to highlight and develop what I take to be the more basic logic of self-consciousness that occurs in Hegel’s text.

I will first focus on the basic orientation of self-consciousness. In the first section, “The Claim of Self-consciousness,” I will discuss the basic claim each being makes when it confronts the other in Hegel’s section on “Independence and Dependence of Self-consciousness: Lordship and Bondage.” Here, what will be discovered is that underneath the overt claim of aggression that each being makes, there is a more fundamental epistemological orientation taking place. In the second section, “The Epistemological Orientation of Self-Consciousness,” I will focus on this epistemological orientation, showing how each being is fundamentally oriented towards the other’s knowledge. However, despite being oriented towards the other’s knowledge, this confrontation results in a life-or-death struggle. This will lead me to the third section, “‘Shared’

24 This is abstract in the sense that Hegel says that everything prior to his discussion of spirit is an abstraction (289§439).
25 Another reason for this reading is that if we place too much importance on the specific example that Hegel uses, we will not be able to engage with the text in a first-person way unless we can understand the specific experience of slavery, an experience foreign to most readers of the text.
Interiority: Intimacy and the Internal Other,” where I will compare these relationships with the relation that the lord has with the bondsman. Finally, in the fourth section, “'More Me than Me': Intimacy and an External Other,” I will show the bondsman’s advance to self-consciousness by showing that the achievement of self-consciousness depends on whether or not he is able to establish a relationship with the lord. This will be done by contrasting the bondsman’s relationship with the lord with the type of relationship that the lord has with the bondsman.

The Claim of Self-Consciousness

Hegel’s analysis of the independence and dependence of self-consciousness begins with the encounter between two beings. This is the most basic experience of the origin of self-consciousness for Hegel because, as he will show, a conscious being only becomes self-conscious by engaging with another. Thus, beginning with an initial encounter between these two beings is the most basic setting for the logic of the experience of self-consciousness. Each enters into this confrontation by positing itself as essential reality. As Hegel writes, “Its essence and absolute object is ‘I’ (129/§186). This is the stance of naïve, immediate independence. Consciousness takes itself to be “absolutely” independent, which means that it takes itself to be independent of any other, that is, free without restriction. Not only does this independence involve being free from so-called external constraints, it also means being free from being locked into one’s own determinacy. We can see this in the way we confront our own reality. On the one hand, we gain our identity from being identified in determinate ways. One is a mother, a chemist, a telemarketer, tall, angry, or boring. These determinate ways define the ways in which we are. On the other hand, we would not feel the independence essential to self-consciousness if these
determinate manifestations exhausted the “content” of ourselves. We must also not be these things in order to understand ourselves as self-conscious beings (not only am I an angry chemist, I am also free not to be an angry chemist). As Hegel writes, self-consciousness must show it is “not attached to any specific existence” (130/§187). In order to identify ourselves as self-conscious selves, we must always be more than the determinate ways we manifest ourselves. Thus, consciousness claims it is “merely the purely negative being of self-identical consciousness” (130/§186).26

In order for self-consciousness to be presented or proven, it must be proven to another self-consciousness. Its Darstellung involves two actions: its own action of assertion and the other’s act of recognition (130/§187). In this sense, the presentation of consciousness is a joint operation. We can see the two-fold (intersubjective) nature of self-presentation by looking at the “hypothetical” nature of self-assertions.

In search of self-knowledge, one might ask: “What kind of a thing am I?” or, more commonly, “Am I X?” (kind, impolite, etc.). While we may only occasionally ask others these kinds of questions, how we gain self-knowledge is much more complex. More often, we have assertions about ourselves that are tested in reality with other people. We take ourselves to be in different determinate ways (or we “posit” assertions about ourselves, to use Hegel’s language). Since our self-assertions must be verified by others, as Hegel argues, they actually function to find out something about oneself, and, consequently, are more accurately hypotheses.27

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26 See also Walter Jaeschke “Die Unendlichkeit der Subjektivität.” He describes the “necessary activity” of subjectivity as “Die Einheit der Selbstbeziehung des Ich besteht “nur” in der Rückkehr aus der Abstraktion von aller Bestimmtheit – und nicht in irgend welchen Akten eines erkennenden selbsverhältnisse” (108).

27 Although the claim of self-consciousness may only be experienced implicitly, by emphasizing the claim being made I am emphasizing the active role made by consciousness in its own self-perception. Taking Wilfrid Sellars’ “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind” as a point of reference, Robert Pippin writes, “the key point is that any conscious attentiveness to content of a sort cannot be said merely to happen to a subject in any subject’s experience,
result, looking more closely at self-knowledge shows us that whether or not we do it explicitly, understanding oneself always takes the form of a question to another.

For example, a person may claim (or “posit” that) she is Swiss, female, intelligent, ugly, or coordinated. She may, for example, know herself as a speaker of French. To be concerned with how one actually is means to be concerned with the objective, external world, since to be actual means to be a part of and to have an effect on the existing, actual world. For instance, a person claiming she is a speaker of French would have to see herself speaking and being understood by others in order to verify this claim. As Hegel’s writes, “for only in this way does the unity of itself in its otherness become explicit for it” (127/§177). Until her ability to be a certain kind of being (a speaker of French) is reflected back to her explicitly by someone capable of recognizing that she can speak French (another speaker of French, not a stone), this claim about herself is merely a hypothetical assertion. Until this claim has been recognized by another, she will not acquire the certainty she needs to know herself in this way.

Hegel is not concerned in this section with one’s knowing particular things about oneself; instead, the concern in the beginning of his fourth chapter is with knowledge of oneself as a self, that is, knowing oneself as a self-conscious being. Nevertheless, the structure of knowing is the same. Like the case of the French speaker who must experience herself being recognized as such in order to have this confirmed, a self-conscious being will have to see this self-assertion reflected back to itself from another self-conscious being.

We have seen that confirmation of one’s self-assertions are necessary for knowledge, but why must this confirmation come from another self-conscious being? Hegel makes it clear that

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but must be a taking…even if not an exercise attended to as such” (Hegel on Self-Consciousness: Desire and Death in the Phenomenology of Spirit 59).
this is the case, both in the chapter on self-consciousness, but also in the final chapter of his discussion of consciousness, “Force and the Understanding: appearance and the supersensible world.” At the end of this chapter, the analysis of the understanding shows that one’s own self is present as an essential component when one attempts to understand things in the world. Our minds are present as shaping what appears to us. Hegel concludes this by saying, “Not merely is consciousness of things only possible for a self-consciousness; rather, it is this self-consciousness alone which is the truth of those shapes’ (118§164). Now, if self-consciousness were possible without another self-consciousness, consciousness would relate to itself at this point. However, it is not able to do this. Hegel writes, “However, this truth is on hand merely for us and not yet for consciousness” (118§164). This conclusion emphasizes the question as to why another is needed, a question Hegel will answer in his discussion of self-consciousness.

What is gained by having another person present is that one can understand what it means to be a perspective on the world. This is conceptually unavailable in a world without others. It is only in its confrontation with another that has a perspective on the world, with a set of desires, that consciousness is able to understand what it would be to be a self. Until its confrontation with another, consciousness was the perspective on the world. In Hegel’s text, each enters into the struggle with the idea they each is the perspective on the world. It is in the world out of this struggle that the bondsman, through relating to another with a set of perspectives, comes that a self is something that has a perspective on things. Without this confrontation, consciousness would not know what it means to “posit,” to interpret, or to have a particular take on things. The bondsman sees this in the lord, and, as we will see, he comes to learn this from himself by having another being with a perspective recognize that he too is a being with a viewpoint on the world. This is the origin of the knowledge of the self.
The Epistemological Orientation of Self-Consciousness

For self-consciousness to know itself to be a self-conscious being it must prove this to itself. In order to prove this to itself, it knows implicitly that this assertion must be accepted by external reality, which in this case means being accepted by another independent self-consciousness. In order for the other to recognize that it is independent, the other must first know self-consciousness to be independent, and then it can reflect this back to self-consciousness. Consequently, self-consciousness implicitly recognizes that its primary concern is with the other’s knowledge. We can see the focus on the other’s knowledge in Hegel’s description of what self-consciousness is “to begin with.” Each being is, Hegel emphasizes, “for each other, shapes of consciousness which have not yet accomplished the movement of absolute abstraction, of rooting-out all immediate being, and of being merely the purely negative being of self-identical consciousness; in other words, they have not as yet exposed (dargestellt) themselves to each other in the form of pure being-for-self” (130/§186). Notice that Hegel describes how consciousness understands itself by referring to how the other understands it. How it posits its own being has little weight, what is essential is what the other knows: “Each is indeed certain of its own self, but not of the other, and therefore its own self-certainty still has no truth” (130/§186).

Since it is concerned with the other’s knowledge, consciousness is concerned with how it appears to another. It appears to the other in the way that it presents itself in external actuality; that is to say, it first appears to the other as a body. To show that it is absolutely independent it must first show it is not attached to any determinacy that could restrict it. Consequently, for the
other to know it is absolutely independent, the other must first know it is not dependent on its body. In order to prove this independence, each engage in staking its live and seeking the death of the other as a way to prove its self-understanding as a self-consciousness. The two-fold action of consciousness, to stake its life and seek the death of the other, is motivated by an orientation towards the other’s knowledge. Hegel writes that “In so far as it is the action of the other, each seeks the death of the other. But in doing so, the second kind of action, action on its own part, is also involved; for the former involves the staking of its own life” (130/§187). Note, he does not say: “when confronted by another self-consciousness, each attempts to kill the other.” Instead, the staking of one’s life comes as the conclusion of consciousness’s consideration for the other’s epistemological needs. From the standpoint of the implicit recognition of the needs for the other’s knowledge, and consequently for its own self-knowledge, consciousness is less worried that the other will kill it than that the other will not try. As a result, the first implicit concern for consciousness is that the other attempt to negate its bodily dependency and not that it try to kill the other. Hegel makes this clear in the order in which he describes the “two-fold action”: “action on the part of the other, and action on its own part” (130/§187). Importantly, the other’s action comes first in the logic of recognition.

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28 John McDowell comments on a lack of discussion of this “quite mysterious” passage in his reading of “lordship and bondage.” His “heterodox” reading of this section finds that passages like these can only be resolved by seeing the dialectic of recognition as within one individual (between the apperceptive I and the empirical self), instead of between two. He writes, “This is quite mysterious at the level of the image of two individuals trying to kill each other” (43). I agree this would be a strange passage if the primary motivation of consciousness was, as is often thought, to kill the other. It should be clear that, unlike McDowell, I make sense of these passages by stressing the intersubjective nature of recognition, instead of restricting recognition to a dialogue within the individual. As Paul Redding writes, “It has to recognize the other as an intentional subject for whom it is a direct object, and this is an intentionality it itself could never directly have.” See Redding, Hegel’s Hermeneutics, 123. See “The apperceptive I and the empirical self: towards a heterodox reading of Lordship and Bondage.” For his discussion with Stephen Houlgate on his reading, see Houlgate, “Houlgate and McDowell: Mastery, Servitude, and Absolute Knowing.”
As we have seen, consciousness is primarily oriented towards proving to the other that it is not dependent on anything. It begins by proving it is not its body, as this is the corporeal immediacy which consciousness knows confronts the other. But why must consciousness seek the death of the other? Certainly, there are many ways one could prove oneself not to be attached to one’s bodily existence. A person could play Russian roulette or wrestle an alligator. But, the encounter described by Hegel takes the form of an attempt to be killed by and an attempt to kill an other. We might wonder why it would not be enough for consciousness to claim absolute independence by simply showing it is not attached to life. This proof would be insufficient to the other, since, if consciousness shows itself to be independent of its body explicitly for the sake of the other’s knowledge, although it would prove itself to be independent from its body, it would prove itself to be dependent on the other. Hegel writes, “Similarly, just as each stakes his own life, so each must seek the other’s death, for it values the other no more than itself; its essential being is present to it in the form of an ‘other’, it is outside of itself and must rid itself of its externality” (131/§187). Since consciousness is committed to proving that “there is nothing present in it which could not be regarded as a vanishing moment,” (131/§187) it must also prove it is not dependent on the other. Staking its life by seeking the death of the other accomplishes the two-fold task of proving itself to be independent from its body and proving its independence from the other.

Although logically what was implicitly understood is that each needs the other for its own self-knowledge, the first action, and, what is the same, the first explicit realization, is that each must stake its own life by seeking the death of the other. Although they were implicitly
attempting to engage in a cooperative relationship, neither understood this explicitly. If they did acknowledge the element of cooperation, this acknowledgement would have immediately challenged their initial claim to absolute independence, because needing another’s cooperation contradicts the claim of absolute independence. The result is that the positions they maintain are anything but cooperative. Given the nature of the claim of self-consciousness to absolute independence, proving this claim leads to a deadly struggle. In this struggle, one of them must back down, and, as a result, become the bondsman.

The lord remains the essential being in the relationship, the bondsman does not. What each needed from the other was a being that would test and confirm their hypothesis of absolute independence. The bondsman, however, fails to engage in the relationship as it was set up, because it take the standpoint that life is more important. Clinging to life, this being becomes the servile consciousness. In order to see why the lord fails to gain knowledge of himself as independent and thus fails to be an independent self-consciousness, we can look at the kind of relationship he has with the bondsman.

“Shared” Interiority: Intimacy and the Internal Other

As we have seen, Hegel’s dialectic of recognition analyzes the logic of self-consciousness by looking at two beings entering into a life and death struggle because of an implicit need for recognition from the other. One of the beings takes the standpoint of holding onto life and becomes the bondsman; the other becomes the lord. The lord, maintaining the

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29 This is cooperative since the action is two-fold and their actions must be coordinated and equal for the concept of recognition to be fulfilled.
30 Of course, the relationship as explicitly set out would have been impossible to maintain, since it began from the impossible assertion of absolute independence.
standpoint of dominance, is able to hold the bondsman in subjection. Focusing on the kind of relationship the lord has with the bondsman, we will see it is one that can be characterized as “intimate” in the first sense described above. It is not one in which the lord can have a relationship with another self-conscious being and so the lord fails to gain the recognition he needs for self-knowledge.

Since the bondsman retreats from the threat of death and the lord does not, the lord has total control of the bondsman. In this kind of relationship, the bondsman has no say, input, or authority on anything whatsoever. As a result, the only desire or will that has any say in anything belongs to the lord. The lord, as Hegel writes, is the “pure essential action in this relationship” (133/§191). The lord determines the meaning and value of everything that exists in the world of the lord and bondsman. Everything encountered, including the bondsman himself, is identified by both as belonging to the lord. There is nothing truly outside of the lord because there is no part of what we might see as “external actuality” that is not the lord’s. As a result, there is a way in which the entire world encountered by the lord is a part of the lord.

The lord is intimately connected to the bondsman both because the bondsman is identified as one of the lord’s things and because it is through the bondsman that the lord relates to his things.\(^{31}\) The bondsman’s action, from the point of view of the lord, is the lord’s own action. As Hegel writes, “what the bondsman does is really the action of the lord” (133/§191). Since the bondsman works on things in the world so that they are useful for the lord, everything the bondsman encounters is dependent on the lord. The lord, claiming to be absolutely independent, won the struggle and showed himself to be able to negate all things (both the

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\(^{31}\) As Hegel writes, the lord relates “immediately to both, and mediately to each through the other” (Phenomenology §190).
bondsman and the things in the world). For most of us, if we in fact need to work, we cannot simply negate things in the world by denying their independence from us; instead, we have to respond to them. We cannot, for example plant corn whenever and wherever we want, but must wait for the proper temperature and we must find fertile soil. But, since when things get to the lord they are already in usable form, the lord can simply “satisfy” his desire and be done with the things.  

The lord has been able to separate the independent from the dependent aspect of the thing. He uses the dependent aspect, leaving the independent aspect of the thing to the bondsman. Since the bondman is working on the things of the world, the lord uses the bondsman much like he would use a tool. The lord does not take his relation to be with something external. He does not confront the bondsman as an object to be understood or interpreted; instead, he immediately orders and uses the bondsman to fulfill his desires. Since the bondsman falls into the background as a familiar tool, the lord does not recognize himself as having any relationship with the bondsman. Despite this misrecognition, the bondsman is fundamental to the lord. He is what enables the lord to be connected to the world. Thus, though he is like a “tool,” he is not like a tool in the sense that the bondsman is something that the lord could or could not use. He does not simply make dealing with the world “easier”; instead, the bondsman makes possible his ability to relate to the external world. While the lord takes everything to be a part of his inner world, this is made possible because the bondsman holds

32 While the struggle for the child to separate from the mother can be identified with the bondsman’s struggle, we can also see the aspects of the child in the lord. Winnicott, for instance, will say that at one stage the infant will confront the world with a “magical omnipotence.” This takes place before “reality testing” has really begun and the infant experiences the world as magically providing for its needs, while the infant does not experience the need to use its own body to manipulate the world and provide for itself. See D.W. Winnicott “Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena” in Playing and Reality.

33 As Hegel writes, “The aspect of its independence he leaves to the bondsman, who works on it” (Phenomenology §190).

34 In Heidegger’s terms, everything the lord encounters, including the bondsman, is “ready-to-hand.” See §15 of Heidegger’s Being and Time.
together what would otherwise be recognized as an “inner” (his desire) and “outer” (external reality) world.

In Hegel’s text, the bondsman is merely a part of the lord and the lord does not confront the bondsman as another person. He does not confront another with whom he must communicate; instead, he gives orders. Since, in confronting the bondsman, he confronts another that is not recognized as another, but is seen to be just another part of himself, he does not take his orders and messages to be sent to another. Having this kind of familiar, intimate relationship with the world and the bondsman prevents the lord from having a relationship with another self-conscious being. This, we will see, prevents the lord from being able to relate to himself.

Since he is not able to recognize the bondsman as another self-conscious being, the lord is unable to properly orient himself to the bondsman’s knowledge. Although the initial, implicit epistemological orientation was with the other’s knowledge, the lord closed off this orientation. In order to gain basic self-knowledge, he must be properly orienting himself to himself, which means recognizing the role the other’s knowledge has in his self-conception. Consequently, the lord does not have the experience of communicating with another, and, what is the same, he does not have the experience of having a relationship with another person.

From the point of view of the bondsman, the bondsman is also initially involved in a similar familiar, intimate relationship with the lord. For the bondsman, everything belongs to

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35 Jessica Benjamin discusses how this attitude of omnipotence forecloses any explicit need to communicate: “Mental omnipotence signifies the absence of this connection, a breakdown of differentiation in which self is assimilated to other or other is assimilated to self. Internalization then replaces interaction or exchange with the outside” (Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination 73).
36 Both of these, as we will see, are shown by Hegel to be one-sided and abstract notions of intimacy or interiority. While there is a sense in which they both inhabit the “inner” space of the lord, properly speaking, there is no true “inner” that exists for a being until it is developed through confrontation with exteriority. It is only in the
the lord, including his own body. Nothing is his own. This is an “intimate” relationship because they “share” their desires. More precisely, the bondsman does not properly have his own desires, but has his world completely enveloped by the lord’s world. Hegel’s bondsman does not have possession of himself; instead, he participates in the inner life of the lord. He does not distinguish himself from the lord; instead, he sees himself as a part of the lord, a piece of the lord’s property and a tool for the lord to use.

“More Me than Me”: Intimacy and an External Other

In this final section, we will look how the bondsman is able to transform its relationship with the lord. I will argue that the bondsman’s ability to gain knowledge of itself as a self comes, not so much from breaking free from the lord, but by having the experience of having a relationship with the lord. Certainly, the bondsman breaks free from the kind of intimate relationship discussed in the previous section; however, what I aim to show is that the bondsman does not break free from this relationship by departing from the lord and losing himself in its work; instead, the bondsman breaks free from the lord by establishing a different kind of relationship with the lord. In order to show this, I will start with the two things that set the bondsman apart from the lord and make it possible for him to experience a relationship with the lord and realize he has a “mind of his own.” These are fear and service.

For the lord, the bondsman was a tool he used to fulfill his desires. The bondsman was used to work on external actuality. Yet, what the lord implicitly desired, in accordance with the needs of recognition, was for the bondsman to be a tool that worked on the lord himself. The lord bondsman’s ability to distance himself from the lord, though by first establishing a relation with him, that any experience of an interior world can be spoken of in Hegel’s analysis of experience.
needed the bondsman to show him he was a self-conscious being. In *Hegel’s Ladder*, H.S. Harris writes that “The sublation of the other self for use as a tool is equally the sublation of myself into usable raw material to be worked on.” This is seen when Hegel writes “it must proceed to supercede the other independent being in order thereby to become certain of itself as the essential being” (128/§180). Since the other is being used as a tool upon one’s self, this “self” must be workable. It must be capable of being transformed into something new. The lord has not prepared himself to be worked on since he has not acknowledged that he is in a position to be determined by another. The lord both failed to put the bondsman into a position to recognize him and failed to make himself transformable through this recognition.

The bondsman, on the other hand, has been transformed into something capable of receiving recognition through fear. The bondsman initially wanted to show that he was an independent, self-conscious being. This meant orienting himself towards the other’s knowledge and asserting the claim that he could not be identified with any of the finite ways he manifested himself to the lord. Initially, he was unable to maintain this claim because he held on to life. The bondsman wanted to claim that nothing about his presentation was essential and all of his finite determinacies were just “vanishing moments.” However, the lord does believe there is nothing essential about the bondsman and that anything about him can be eliminated. The lord asserts this about the bondsman and the bondsman, being oriented towards the lord’s knowledge, receives this recognition. Through facing the fear of death embodied in the lord, the bondsman learns that there is nothing stable about him. Hegel writes, “In that experience it has been quite unmanned, has trembled in every fiber of its being, and everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundations” (134/§194). Every plan, every desire he had for the world, everything

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37 Harris, *Hegel’s Ladder Vol I*, 346.
he wanted for himself and everything he thought about himself are shown to the bondsman to be just passing moments. The bondsman has set aside all of his desires and has taken on those of the lord. This may seem to be an unfortunate, total loss of himself to the lord; however, what both set out to do in the beginning was to prove, through the help of the other, that they were not attached to any particular piece of actuality. Thus, this loss of himself is one part of what he set out to prove in the beginning of their relationship. They both implicitly desired the help of the other to prove that each was independent and beyond any given determination. The lord, through the bondsman’s fear of death, acknowledges the second half of this claim. Although the lord does not explicitly acknowledge that the bondsman is independent, his explicit assertion is that none of the bondsman’s finite determinations are essential. 38 This is why Hegel writes that “the fear of the lord is indeed the beginning of wisdom” (135/§195).

Having lost his identification of himself with his bodily manifestations, the bondsman now has to gain an understanding of himself as a being that chooses and acts. He gains this through service to the lord. Initially, the bondsman has the same kind of intimate relationship with the lord that the lord did with the bondsman. The bondsman was enveloped by the lord’s desires. The bondsman, as property of the lord, was just another part of the lord. However, in service the bondsman must also act. 39 In acting, the bondsman must work on and interpret the world. This occurs in two ways. First, the bondsman must interpret the lord’s wishes, and second, the bondsman must work on objective reality for the lord. I will focus on the second of these first, emphasizing the intersubjective character of the bondsman’s labor. This is essential because if we restrict his action to a dyadic account, involving nothing but the bondsman and his

38 Though if the lord recognized his reliance upon the bondman’s particular skills, he would have to give up this position.
39 On the bondsman’s contradictory imperative to act and not act, see John Russon’s “Hermeneutical Pressure: Intersubjectivity and Objectivity” in Reading Hegel’s Phenomenology.
work, we will miss the intersubjective character of recognition (i.e. that self-consciousness “exists only in being recognized”).

Carrying out the lord’s wishes involves working with the objective world, and it is by responding to the lord’s external actuality that the bondsman begins to gain a sense of himself as an independent, self-conscious actor. By carrying out the orders of another, the bondsman realizes he is capable of more than just satisfying immediate desires. In order for the lord to satisfy his desires, he merely has to express them, since, as we saw, the lord does not deal with the independence of external things. The bondsman, however, must plan and carry out a project independently from his own particular interests about something (an object in actuality) and for someone (the lord) completely independent from him. They must both be treated as independent and objective because for the bondsman, results matter. If, for example, the bondsman is ordered to build a table for the lord, it is not enough that the bondsman wishes it to be done correctly. What is essential is both that he understands how to build tables and, more importantly, that his table building is recognized by the lord. The bondsman depends on both the lord and the objects of his labor and both of these must be treated as independent from him. In order to do this he must hold back his own particular interests and desires. As Hegel writes, “work is desire held in check” (135/§195). By holding back his desires the bondsman is capable of proving to himself that he is more than just his particular determinacies. Thus, by working on things in the world, he works on himself.

The bondsman discovers that the products of his labor are expressions of himself. By forming and shaping the things in the world, the bondsman can begin to see himself as an actual self-conscious being by seeing himself effective in actuality. The bondsman sees himself in actuality, that is, in the objective world, by seeing himself in his effects, in the products of his
labor. Nevertheless, this self-expression can only be a self-expression because his labor is a communication with another self-conscious being. It is important to see the role the lord plays in the recognition of the bondsman’s self-expression. Williams argues that “the slave ‘comes to himself,’ not through the mediation of intersubjective recognition but through labor.”40 Williams cites Habermas, who compares the Jena Realphilosophie with the Phenomenology, arguing that, at the time of the Phenomenology, Hegel’s account of labor was not intersubjective. For Williams, this suggests an inconsistency in Hegel, where, contrary to Hegel’s stated intention, “recognition is superfluous for self-identity, or at least superfluous for the slave’s identity.”41 However, Hegel gives us good reason to look for the intersubjective dimension in labor, which of course, is not a departure from Hegel’s text but follows from the section’s first sentence:

“Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged” (127/178).42 Consequently, our reading should attempt to understand how Hegel could claim that self-consciousness is intersubjective.

As we saw, everything the bondsman encounters is the lord’s. Thus, in working on things in the world, the bondsman sees himself, mediately, as interacting with the lord. When Hegel, writing about the bondsman forming the object, says “this objective negative moment is none other than the alien being before which it has trembled,” (135/§196) he means that when

40 Williams, Hegel’s Ethics of Recognition, 66.
41 Williams, Hegel’s Ethics of Recognition, 66.
42 In The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts, Axel Honneth discusses Marx’s relation to Hegel’s account of labor in the Phenomenology. Honneth says that for Marx, “the experience of having an ability objectified is so intertwined with the mental [geistige] anticipation of a possible consumer that this experience gives the individual an intersubjectively mediated feeling of self-worth” (232/146). However, Honneth argues that Marx’s focus on the intersubjective basis of creative work as one primarily made up of producers and consumers, Marx’s account “reduces the possible relationships of recognition between people to the satisfaction of material needs” (235/148). Honneth continues by arguing that by restricting labor to merely the economic self-assertion, he eventually lost dimension of labor that was concerned with recognition and “the key for interpreting class struggle in terms of the philosophy of history” (237/149). While, Honneth disagrees with the extent to which Marx reduced the intersubjective dimension of labor to a concern with consumption, it seems clear that Honneth would follow my interpretation of Hegel’s account of labor as, nonetheless, intersubjective (The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts).
encountering the lord’s objects, he is encountering the lord.\(^{43}\) Just as the lord relates to the bondsman in a mediated way through things, the bondsman relates to the lord through things.\(^{44}\)

The bondsman did not tremble before an abstract conception of death because death did not present itself in the abstract. The bondsman did not tremble because he contemplated the idea, for example, that death is inevitable. Rather, the bondsman trembled before a concrete being, the lord, who was experienced as capable of ending the bondsman’s life. Consequently, it is through negating objective actuality, that is, through concretely relating to the lord’s world, that the bondsman is able to relate to the lord.

By working on things in the world, the bondsman engages in personal communication with the lord. This is “personal” communication because, unlike the lord, the bondsman is communicating with another self-conscious being, that is, with another person.\(^{45}\) The bondsman is able to participate in personal dialogue with the lord through listening and responding. We can imagine a concrete situation. First, the lord gives a command. The bondsman responds to this command by interpreting what the lord has said. This interpretation is an initial instance of

\(^{43}\) Although Frederick Neuhouser does note the intersubjective character of the bondsman’s work, he interprets this sentence differently. For Neuhouser, the “alien being” is the world, which earlier has the significance of something alien. Thus, Neuhouser’s account of labor remains dyadic. While I do not disagree with the aspects of the bondsman’s relationship to death through labor that Neuhouser discusses, I would still add the lord as an essential dimension of this relationship, since, if the lord does not play an essential role here, Hegel’s account would be dyadic, failing to be the intersubjective account he set out to give. See Frederick Neuhouser, “Desire, Recognition, and the Relation between Bondsman and Lord.” Werner Marx makes this point by emphasizing the “doppelsinnig” character of the relationship of the lord and bondsman. He writes, “Dieses Tun des knechtischen Bewußtseins – dieses unselbständige Verhalten den Dingen gegenüber – ist aber eigentlich die Wesensfolge des Tuns des herrischen Bewußtseins, denn dies ist die “rein negative Macht”, das “reine wesentliche Tun”, eben dadurch, daß es dieses Abhängigkeitsverhältnis des Knechtes gegenüber den Dingen bewirkt hat, und das knechtische Tun ist deshalb ein völlig unwesentliches, weil “erwirktes” Tun.” See Das Selbstbewußtsein in Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes, 77. I follow Chapter 6 of Russon’s Reading Hegel’s Phenomenology, “Hermeneutical Pressure: Intersubjectivity and Objectivity” in emphasizing how the world encountered by the bondsman is really the lord.

\(^{44}\) Hegel explains the lord’s relationship to the bondsman and the things in the world: the master in that way relates himself “a) immediately to both, and b) mediately to each by way of the other” (Phenomenology §190).

\(^{45}\) Kojève sees the lord’s role in the bondsman’s labor when he writes, “only action carried out in another’s service is Work (Arbeit) in the proper sense of the word: an essentially human and humanizing action.” However, he continues by saying that, “by acting to satisfy an instinct that is not my own, I am acting in relation to what is not—for me—instinct. I am acting in relation to an idea, a nonbiological end.” Alexandre Kojève. Introduction to the Reading of Hegel.
communication with a being that gives meaning to things, an independent self-consciousness.

Secondly, the bondsman responds. He communicates with the lord by carrying out his interpretation of the lord’s command. The medium through which the lord and bondsman communicate is the objects of the bondsman’s labor. Although the lord may not be, as Heidegger would say, “factically present” when the bondsman is working on things in the world, he is still there with the bondsman. The lord is present in the objects that the bondsman works on both because they are the lord’s and because they are being made for the lord. As we saw above, the bondsman’s encounter with the objects of his labor is also an encounter with the lord. The bondsman’s “response” is found in the products of his labor. For example, the lord’s says “make a table.” The bondsman interprets this command and makes what he takes to be a table. The finished product is a communication which both asserts “here is a table” and also asks “is this a table?” Since he must act, he must give sense to things (by asserting “this is a table”); yet, he must also be open to receiving the sense of things (by asking “is this a table”) because the bondsman has oriented himself towards the lord’s knowledge.

It is in this way that the bondsman is able to form a relationship with the lord and by establishing a relationship with the lord, the bondsman is first able to relate to himself. If the bondsman were to claim that his self-consciousness was arrived at alone, he would be making the same mistake that the lord made.

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46 Heidegger writes that “along with the work, we encounter not only entities ready-to-hand but also entities with Dasein’s kind of Being” (Being and Time 71/100).

47 In You Be My Body for Me: Body, Shape, and Plasticity, Catherine Malabou and Judith Butler both talk about the fiction involved in claiming any absolute detachment. Discussing Bulte’s work, Malabou writes “detachment always entails some attachment. Indeed, the very act of claiming absolute detachment necessarily reveals an attachment to it; otherwise, why would it have to be claimed?” (p. 614). A Companion To Hegel. Eds Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur. Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
recognize or “forgetting” that the bondsman was making his “independence” possible.⁴₈ The bondsman, likewise, will be mistaken if he makes the same claim, namely, that he has arrived at self-consciousness without the lord.⁴⁹

We are now in a position to see how it is a second sense of intimacy, where one confronts another as other, that makes possible the bondsman’s knowledge of himself as a self. The bondsman begins in a relationship with the lord that has the bondsman failing to give its own sense to things, but would be enveloped by the lord’s desire; however, looking at Hegel’s text, we see that in service the bondsman transforms his relationship with the lord and begins to participate in giving sense to things. It is only by first doing this in communion with an external other, another self-consciousness, that he can gain the ability to do it on his own. Although we may describe this relationship to the lord as an “estranged relationship,” it is nonetheless a relationship and this is what was essential for self-consciousness. Further, it is from this relationship with the lord that the bondsman gains his very understanding of himself as a self. Thus, the bondsman enters into an intimate relationship with the lord that is more intimate than the relationship he had with things in the world, since it is from the lord that he gains his very ability to be a self in the first place. Thus, since it is by being in communication with the lord that the bondsman is able to have a sense of himself, the bondsman is in an intimate relationship that is, to use Augustine’s phrase, “more intimate than the innermost part” of him.

⁴⁸ “This forgetting involves a clever trick” says Butler in The Psychic Life of Power, p. 35. Butler focuses on the body, and how the bondsman will substitute for the lord’s body so long as neither makes it clear that this is what is happening, for to do so would undermine the lord’s claim to independence. The objects of the bondsman’s labor will become, for Butler, sites of contestation where the claim to ownership involves a “redoubling.” On my reading (which does not oppose Butler’s), the sites for contestation are also sites for communication, engagement, and the establishing of the shared knowing necessary for the bondsman to develop self-consciousness.

⁴⁹ This is in fact fundamentally what takes place in the Phenomenology of Spirit because the shape of the bondsman turns into the shape of “Stoicism,” which claims a radical independence or detachment which is, in the end, shown to be an untenable position.
Conclusion

We began our investigation of self-knowledge by looking at the origin of the self. What we saw is one is only able to relate to oneself through another. In order to relate to ourselves through another, we must first establish some kind of relationship with the other. Through this initial relationship, we gain the ability to relate to ourselves. The most basic form of self-knowledge is consequently an intersubjective phenomenon. Further, this self-relation is an achievement. Gaining the ability to relate to oneself is something that must be done in this intersubjective context. Now that we have seen the origin of self-knowledge and the self in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, we will see how this structure of self-knowledge is reflected outside of the context of the origin of self-knowledge. We will do this by looking at how we can gain access to another self and how another self can gain access to us.
Chapter Two

Gaining Access to Oneself and Another

Knowing not how to listen, they do not [know] how to speak. – Heraclitus

Introduction

Stoicism and “Real Individuality” are two of the most familiar shapes of consciousness found in ordinary life that we see in Hegel’s Phenomenology. In Reading Hegel’s Phenomenology, Russon writes that “We all are essentially stoics, and this is shown by the simple fact that we can say ‘I’: the saying of ‘I’ is what shows one to be a ‘free self-consciousness.’” H.S. Harris titles his section on “Real Individuality” in Hegel’s Ladder “The Way We Live Now.” These two shapes of consciousness articulate ways in which we affirm ourselves as independent, self-conscious beings. They do this by prioritizing one’s own interior life.

Stoicism speaks to this priority of one’s inner life in its most basic question: “What is mine?” This question is also prominent in Hegel’s discussion of the Real Individual because what guides her identification of what really matters is what she counts as her own and within

50 Russon, Reading Hegel’s Phenomenology, 16.
her control. This question is important because it sets up the terms out of which we will develop our self-identities. Stoicism and Real Individuality show that what one identifies as one’s own is not a simple issue, and parsing out this concern reveals different articulations of what self-expression must be and how it contributes to self-knowledge. This chapter will focus on these two figures in Hegel’s text in order to analyze how it is that we can gain access to another or to ourselves.

In Chapter One we saw how Hegel argues that establishing a sense of oneself as a self-conscious being is an intersubjective achievement. This achievement involves establishing an inner life of one’s own. By “inner life” I am referring the desires, plans, and ideas that the bondsman had to experience as his own in order to experience himself as a self-conscious being. When those are recognized as belonging particularly to him, the bondsman was able to separate off a space that was uniquely his own. This establishment of an inner world is required for the experience of self-consciousness. Before the confrontation with another, there was no distinction made between inner and outer. In my study so far, I have argued that, initially, neither the lord nor the bondsman distinguished between inner and outer because everything that was was enveloped by the lord’s interiority by his desires. The bondsman gained a sense of his own inner life through the imperatives involved in his service and this interiority was confirmed by the lord to allow him to develop the original stance of self-consciousness. Now that we have seen the development of the inner life, we will look at how one can claim to have access to the interiority of another and oneself.

We often claim to have a privileged access to ourselves. Since this inner world is “ours,” we take ourselves to be the sole beings with immediate access to it; we take ourselves to immediately know who we are. Gaining knowledge of oneself, we might think, is as simple as
reflecting on who we are. We just have to “look inside” of this “space” to which we have private 
access. However, the analysis that Hegel gives of self-consciousness shows that the stance of 
immediate introspective access to oneself is flawed. We have already seen how this experience 
presupposes a prior intersubjective interaction. We will now look at the problem of the 
presumption of the immediate interior access first from the perspective of observation of another 
(through Hegel’s analysis of Phrenology) and from the perspective of observation of oneself (in 
“Real Individuality”). We will see that, in both cases, Hegel’s argument implies that the 
individual does not have a privileged access to her interiority such that she need not consult the 
social world for knowledge of herself. In order to accomplish this, the following chapter will 
give an analysis of experience from the position of the listener and speaker, respectively. The 
chapter will have three parts.

I will first focus on Stoicism, where I will give the basic logic of self-consciousness that 
is being drawn upon in the relevant discussion from Hegel’s chapter on reason. I begin with a 
discussion of stoicism as the first shape of consciousness that has developed a conception of an 
inner life. The conception of an inner life is fundamental to Hegel’s discussion of self-hood and 
self-consciousness because until one acquires for oneself a space that is distinctly one’s own, 
there is no proper conception of selfhood. As we saw in the bondsman’s development of his 
concept of self-consciousness in Chapter One, in order to feel that one is a self, one must have 
the experience of having desires that are distinctly one’s own.

Part One will focus on understanding another person, where I will discuss the concepts of 
the inner and outer in Hegel’s discussion of physiognomy and phrenology. I will follow Hegel’s 
analysis of observation and action within the standpoint of reason. This will involve focusing on 
Hegel’s discussion of phrenology in “Observation of the relation of self-consciousness to its
immediate actuality: physiognomy and phrenology,” in order to look at the experience of understanding another’s self-expressions. While Stoicism develops an understanding of interiority, Hegel’s discussion of the observation of reason gives the basic logic of how we might attempt to understand the inner through the expressions of another. We then move, in Part Three, to the more concrete experience of expressing oneself, in order to show how, not only is immediate access to the inner of another impossible on the terms of rational observation alone, but even our attempt to gain immediate access to ourselves is shown to be incoherent.

In Part Two, I will discuss being understood by another. I will begin with “The concept of real individuality,” where I will look at Hegel’s figure of the “Real Individual.” The Real Individual is a figure that takes herself to have immediate access to herself. She takes herself to be capable of having authority over herself, what she means when she speaks, and the kind of person that she is. This figure will then be the focus of the rest of the chapter in order to see how Hegel critiques this attitude towards self-knowledge. In “The Interior Circle of Action in Hegel’s Account of “Real Individuality,” we will see how Hegel shows the ways in which experience should challenge one’s self-conception. Not only does one have one’s self-conception to consult regarding self-knowledge, one also has one’s experience of oneself in dialogue with others. Since experience of ourselves enters into the context for knowing, the Real Individual must figure out what to make of its experience of itself. In my next section, “The Dismissed Appearance of Objectivity,” we see how it is that the Real Individual can disregard the apparent objectivity of its experience of itself, choosing instead to hold onto its naïve self-conception. Finally, I will look at what Hegel calls “Die Sache Selbst,” or “the thing itself.” Hegel’s discussion of Die Sache selbst concerns itself with identifying and concentrating on what is truly shown in the experience of encountering one’s self or that of another.
Although the real individual is concerned with “communication,” we will see that she places what is important within herself so her communication is intrapersonal communication. Essentially, she sees no problem with self-expression because she thinks expression is simply the displaying of oneself, taking the external, contingent matters to have no bearing on the already finished reality of the Real Individual’s self. After highlighting the attractiveness of this position, I will show how, in the end, the Real Individual learns that there is a problem with self-expression. What we will see is that from the position of both the listener and the speaker we learn the same twofold lesson. First, these experiences show us that a person’s activity, which is always in relation to others, in contrast to her supposed possibility or intention, must be taken to be what is true or really matters. This lesson is learned both from Hegel’s analysis of Phrenology and from his analysis of the Real Individual. Both of these shapes of consciousness show that what really matters must be responsive to the “objective,” intersubjective reality to which each of us is ultimately beholden. Second, these experiences show us that there must be a broader, more fundamental context in which listening and speaking take place. Hegel calls this “spirit.”

_Stoicism and its Development from Servitude_

As I argued in Chapter One, in its service, the bondsman confronted an alien world that belonged to the lord. The lord determined the meaning of everything and this experience was, for the bondsman, an experience of inhabiting the lord’s interiority. In confronting the things in the world, the bondsman, by inhabiting the lord’s desires and meaningfulness, confronted a mind that was not his own, but rather an “outsider’s mind” (*fremder Sinn*) (136/§196). The world was
infused with the lord’s meaningfulness and not the bondsman’s alienating confrontation with the world was that of confronting an alien meaningfulness (*fremder Sinn*).

I now want to look at how this relationship with the lord made it possible for the bondsman to have “a mind of his own.” According to Hegel’s text, the bondsman finds its ability to relate to itself by finding its own meaningfulness (*eigner Sinn*) in the world. I argued that it accomplished this by coming to be recognized by the lord through the products of its labor. What we have seen is that although before the bondsman received this recognition it did not yet take itself to be an independent being, when it sees itself acting in the external world it does not take the being encountered (itself) to be something new; rather, it seems that it sees itself as a being that was always there, who it already was. In other words, though, from our perspective as the reader, its self-consciousness was created through the lord’s recognition, it is not experienced as such. When the bondsman discovered that it was a being giving its own interpretation and meaningfulness to things, the moment of that discovery was the achievement of self-consciousness. Through seeing itself in its work, the bondsman acquires its *eigner Sinn* (136/§196), that is, it encounters its own meaningfulness in the world. This is how it acquires a “mind of its own” (*eigner Sinn*). Thus, when it sees its “mind” or meaningfulness at work in the world, it realizes it has a mind.\(^5\) However, the bondsman does not experience its self-consciousness as having been achieved, but as always having been there.\(^6\) Hegel characterizes the bondman’s self-recognition as a *Wiederfinden*, a “retrieval” of something “found again.”

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5\(^1\) Hyppolite writes that “Self-consciousness is no longer a living self-consciousness; it is now a thinking self-consciousness” (179). See *Genesis and Structure*.

6\(^2\) As a result, the stoic standpoint is a standpoint which sees no need for recognition, though its development logically depended on it. Thus, as Werner Marx says, “Es sucht nicht wie der Herr eine Anerkennung” (107). See *Das Selbstbewusstsein in Hegel’s Phänomenologie des Geistes*. 
can see that the temporal structure of consciousness’s self-recognition is complex since, although
the bondsman is not explicitly self-conscious until it recognizes itself as such, when it does
recognize this it takes this new knowledge of himself to apply to what it always was.53 Hegel
writes, “Therefore, by way of this retrieval [Wiederfinden], he comes to acquire through his own
means a mind of his own (eigner Sinn), and he does this precisely in the work in which there had
seemed to be merely some outsider’s mind (fremder Sinn)” (136/§196).

Achieving its own sense or a “mind of his own” is a significant step for consciousness,
but it still may not achieve the independence consciousness desires. This is because, says Hegel,
“der eigne Sinn ist Eigensinn,” that is, to have one’s own mind or sense of things is
stubbornness, “a freedom still enmeshed in servitude” (136/§196).54 The fear of death allows one
to rid oneself of an attachment to one’s arbitrary inclinations and to the idiosyncrasy of
personality. If this fear is not taken on universally then one may still cling onto some unessential
aspect of oneself and treat it as essential. What is essential to self-consciousness, as we saw in
Chapter One, is that it be the pure negative power to negate any aspect of itself. It gains this
power through the other via the fear of death, which shows it that there is nothing essential to it
besides this negative power. If it clings to some aspect of its personality, it will remain stubborn,
unable to negate everything about itself. Eigensinn is stubborn because the bondsman came to
have “a skill which is master over some things, but not over the universal power and the whole
of objective being” (136/§196). The bondsman gained his freedom in particular ways in gaining
competency with respect to certain skills. This means it can see its eigner Sinn in, for example,

53 In the Science of Logic, Hegel connects essence, as Wesen, with gewesen, the past participle of Sein, writing that
essence is “past, but timelessly past.”
54 As Hyppolite writes, “The stubborn person has not risen above a life and a situation of which he remains the
prisoner; he finds not the pure I, but the I that is still bound to a nature that he has not made. His goal is an alien goal
presented by nature; his desire and his labor remain limited to a particular sphere” (184). See Genesis and Structure.
table-making or food-preparation. If he attaches himself to these specific skills as parts of himself, he will remain servile. This is because if one asserts that what is to be valued is the products of one’s labor, one has little control over one’s own success and freedom. If the bondsman’s value remains bound up with the table, he will need the master’s recognition in order to be the kind of person (a skilled table maker) he wants to be, since he requires the master to recognize that the table made is adequate, or meets the (really the lord’s) criteria for a successful table. Further, of course, the master could cut off the bondsman’s hands, preventing his ability and freedom to achieve success and what he values. Stoicism removes itself from these possibilities for failure and servitude by retreating into the pure interior realm of thinking.

Hegel distinguishes between the eigensinniger nature of eigner Sinn and the freedom of Stoicism. He writes that “Eigensinn is the freedom [Freiheit] which holds onto some singularity [Einzelheit] and remains within servitude; Stoicism, however, returns to the freedom which is immediately from itself the pure universality of thought” (199/§199). Thus, while the bondsman’s stubbornness may keep him in servitude, Stoicism is the freedom from this stubbornness by completely disengaging oneself from the particularities of one’s existence.

As Epictetus wrote in the Discourses, Stoicism is fundamentally concerned with “what is mine and what is not mine.” He urges us to consider this question so that we can be in harmony with what we can and cannot control. This question is said to help us because, if we act as though we can control what we cannot, we will constantly be disappointed. Further, we will find ourselves unable to attain the freedom desired from this “stoic” standpoint since, if we place the requirements for our freedom outside of our control, we have put ourselves in a dependent position to them.

What then, do we normally take to be “ours?” What do we take to represent “ourselves” or our “interiority”? One way to identify this is to ask, what are the things, such that if another were given access to them, I would feel exposed? (I would feel as though I were seen). For example, crossing a national border by car can reveal what one takes to be one’s own. I recently crossed the border from Canada to the United States by car. The car was registered in the United States and I had a US passport so I was not entering as a foreigner. I had nothing, to my knowledge, that was illegal to bring across the border and, for that reason, I had little reason to be worried; nevertheless, this situation brought with it a certain amount of anxiety. The border control agent first looked under the hood of my car. I had never seen a border agent do this and I became a bit anxious. I wondered: What is he looking for? Will he notice I had my car battery changed in Canada? Is this somehow illegal? Will he care? He also looked in the back seat and in the trunk. I had no reason to suspect that there was anything to worry about in the car, but nevertheless this experience was uncomfortable. What was immediately obvious is how both the border agent and I identified me with the car. The car was a part of me and represented me. When he looked under the hood, in the trunk, or in the back seat, I felt exposed. I was responsible for anything that would be found there because we both took the car to be identified with me. If somehow he found something objectionable, it would be identified as part of me. When crossing the border, I recognize that I am identified with the car; I include the car as a part of myself. In this situation, my inner being envelops the car since the car and its contents will count as expressing who I am. The officer entering the vehicle is entering into my intimate sphere, the sphere marked off as and for me. Through the example of crossing the border, we can see that it is in encountering something other than me that I am both forced and able to mark off an area that counts as my own. My “body” is determined in a situation where others negotiate
with me as to the limits and contents of my self. Identifying the borders of myself so broadly that I identify myself with my possessions makes me vulnerable to others since when my body becomes something over which others have control (sometimes obviously more control than I do) my freedom is taken away and I am put in a dependent relationship with others.

We can see that answering the question “What is mine?” can reveal that what I take to count as me can expand to involve several spheres. Inner thoughts, the naked body, the space immediately around one’s body, property, dwelling, family, and one’s homeland are all things which one can take to be intimate parts of oneself. Epictetus argues that we should practice restricting these spheres, to withdraw ourselves from all of these externalizations of ourselves.56 He says, for example, “As an exercise, consider the smallest thing to which you are attached. For instance suppose you have a favorite cup. It is, after all, merely a cup; so if it should break, you could cope. Next, build up to things – or people – toward which your clinging feelings and thoughts intensify.”57 Piece by piece, we are asked to cut off these parts of ourselves as they do not fall within our sphere of absolute control. We can see an example of this modification of oneself when Hegel discusses the “beauty of soul” in “The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate.” Here, Hegel highlights this strategy of separating from oneself what is not under one’s control. Hegel explains, “The man who lets go what another approaches with hostility, who ceases to call his what the other assails, escapes grief for loss, escapes handling by the other or by the judge, escapes the necessity of engaging with the other. If any side of him is touched, he withdraws

56 Lauer writes, “A freedom such as this is, obviously, a rather abstract freedom; it remains indifferent to the concrete facts of life” (137). See A Reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology. Pinkard writes that “The stoic’s solution is to become indifferent to whether he is master or slave, for if true independence lies in the freedom of thought, then one’s independence cannot be a matter of either mastery or servitude, for such things cannot affect one’s real independence” (66). See Hegel’s Phenomenology. Rauch writes, “Conceptually freedom is defined as indifference (apatheia)” (107). See Hegel’s Phenomenology of Self-Consciousness.
57 Epictetus, Art of Living, 7.
himself therefrom and simply lets go into the other’s hands a thing which in the moment of the attack he has alienated.”

As we can see, Hegel is emphasizing our ability to mark off the space we take to be our own. What is considered “inner” is not a fixed and obvious boundary; instead, this boundary between the inner and outer is determined through our interactions with others, and, in this case, it may be preferable to take part in limiting one’s sphere of interiority because if one’s conception of what is one’s own is tied up with what is dependent on others, then one’s freedom seems to be limited. Stoicism attempts to achieve a pure form of freedom by cutting itself off from any dependency by focusing on what is completely its own and within its control. The only domain where we could have this stoic conception of pure freedom would be to find a truly private and personally intimate interior space. This space is found in the space of thinking. Thus, the stoic retreats into inner life of thought. The “content” of this inner life is pure thinking. We can see this as developing the notion of self-consciousness that began with the lord and bondsman.

The inner life that is its own does not encompass everything we might take to occur within our “inner selves.” Emotion, for example, is something we generally take to be part of the content of our inner lives, yet the stoic does not identify with it. This is because emotions happen to us. We are passive recipients of emotional experiences and for the stoic our emotional life is to be mastered by the part of us we affirm when we assert ourselves, the thinking part.

We again see this passive servitude in physical suffering. In physical suffering, I experience pain as something happening to me. It becomes something I must try to deal with and

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58 Hegel, “The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate,” 235. This method of “escape” from the control of others is beautifully portrayed in Bernini’s sculpture “Apollo and Daphne.” This sculpture is based on Ovid’s portrayal in the Metamorphoses. In the sculpture, Apollo pursues Daphne. He is filled with love, and she with hatred. As he finally approaches her, she finds the only escape still possible, and, deadening herself to him, turns into a tree. The sculpture shows us the moment where Apollo begins to touch her, but as he does he will not touch the living Daphne, but something dead and external to her (bark, leaves, and branches).
manage. By taking this stance (this shape of consciousness), the ‘I’ that is affirmed is not the body, etc., but the ‘I’ of pure thinking interiority. In order to be more fully in control of “myself” I abstract from the broader limits I might give myself, those that include my body, and instead focus on the simple affirmative I of the will.

The stoic takes this to be the most free and interior form of relation because here thinking is supposed to be wholly one’s own activity and not something that happens to one. The whence and whither of thinking stay within the inner being of the thinker. This makes possible a freedom unbounded by the finite determinacy of nature.

In his discussion of the “Freedom of Self-Consciousness: Stoicism, Skepticism, and the Unhappy Consciousness,” Hegel demonstrates that stoic interiority ultimately entails an implicit connection with the world. This is shown in Hegel’s third form of the “unhappy consciousness,” where consciousness finds itself within and a part of the unchangeable. Recognizing this explicitly is the experience of “reason”

In his section on “reason,” Hegel investigates the kind of experience wherein we posit a fundamental ability to relate ourselves to the world. When we understand ourselves and the world as rational, we take the world to be, in principle, understandable. The shift does not simply involve orienting myself to the world (consciousness) or of the world being understood in the terms of my self (self-consciousness); instead, there is posited a fundamental relatability between the two. This is the kind of assertion involved in the attitude that Hegel’s calls “reason.” Hegel’s basic claim about reason is that it is “the certainty which consciousness has of being all reality”

59 The problem that will be seen is, in Harris’s words, “Stoicism is therefore an incomplete negation of otherness. The determinate content of consciousness is blandly accepted” (388). See Hegel’s Ladder, Vol. I.
60 We will see a similar stance on interiority in Hegel’s discussion of “Real Individuality.” As in Stoicism, where what is one’s own remains within one’s sphere of control to ensure freedom, in “real individuality,” writes Hegel, “the entire action does not go outside itself, either as circumstances, or as end, or means or as a work done” (§401).
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(158/§233). By claiming to have access to the world in principle, reason posits that it and the world are of the same kind. In other words, by taking the stance of reason, consciousness not only takes itself to be rational, but it claims the world is rational as well. If I were rational and the world was not, there would be no way for me to make sense of what I am experiencing. The stance of reason takes the stance that the world is in principle understandable. By positing the world as understandable, reason has posited a basic unity between itself and the world. Each must behave rationally. With reason as one’s principle or goal, one confronts the world as something that could be understood. The initial stance this takes is one of observation. We confront the world to see what it has to tell us.

For the remainder of this chapter, I will focus on the ways in which we take private interiority to be accessible or understandable from without. The rest of this chapter will have two main divisions. The first division will look at this experience from the standpoint of an observer or “listener.” Here I will focus on the ways in which another’s “individuality” or “interiority” is taken to be understandable. The second division will look at this experience from the standpoint of an actor or “speaker,” from someone who takes herself to be understandable to the world.

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61 Russon writes that “what reason knows according to this identification is that it, qua this singular empirical self, can and must find the unifying ground of things” (74). See “Hegel’s Phenomenology of Reason and Dualism.”
Part One: Understanding another

The inner and outer in Physiognomy and Phrenology

In “Observation of the relations of self-consciousness to its immediate actuality: physiognomy and phrenology,” Hegel’s primary aim is, as the title suggests, to understand the relation between a self-conscious individual and how it immediately appears in the actual world. In our everyday dealings with others, we interpret and posit some kind of identity between who someone “really is” and how they immediately appear to us.\(^{62}\) Hegel includes the discussion of physiognomy and phrenology because it addresses this fundamental experience of consciousness.\(^{63}\) He does not include discussion of theories that do not address the experience of consciousness in an important way. Consequently, while these two sciences may no longer demand to be taken seriously, a task in reading this section is to understand the ways in which he is speaking about a fundamental experience with which we can relate.

When attempting to understand another person, we have direct access to their concrete manifestations, like the things they say, their facial expressions, etc.\(^{64}\) However, when understanding other people, we take ourselves to be understanding something distinct from any particular example or manifestation of themselves. That is, we make a distinction between “who they are” and “what they are doing or saying.” We can see this in the statement “you don’t look yourself today.” In this statement, we can see that the initial “you” is different from the

\(^{62}\) Harris writes that “There must be some way in which the free, self-defining, fully monadic character of the individual can be acknowledged, without the monad’s becoming really ‘windowless’” (583). *Hegel’s Ladder*, Vol. I.

\(^{63}\) In *A Reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Lauer writes that “if these pseudo-sciences had not existed, Hegel would almost have had to invent them, since that is the direction in which the dialectic as he describes is moving” (170).

\(^{64}\) This problem can also be seen in Hegel’s discussion of the one and the many that can be found throughout his discussion of consciousness (sense-certainty, perception, and the understanding of forces).
“yourself.” A comparison is made between the two “selves” the first (“you”) is the “perceived” self that is identified with the actual, concrete manifestations. The “yourself” refers to some notion we have of the person, the “real thing” that lies behind the appearing self. This presents an initial difference between the inner and outer of a person.

Hegel takes up the discussion of a person’s inner and outer in his discussion of physiognomy and phrenology. Here, we see that consciousness, in order to understand the “inner” self of another, posits a distinction between its inner being and this inner being’s external sign. As a stance of reason, the attitude involved in this discussion sets out to prove that it has access to “reality.” In this case, this means asserting that one has access to another and can know another through observing or listening to her.

The first thing that is done in the experience Hegel is describing in his discussion of physiognomy and phrenology is that a distinction is posited between a person’s inner and outer being. This was seen in the experience of noticing that another person “does not look like herself.” Also, this is one of the basic attitudes we may take when trying to understand another person. We take their smile, tone of voice, or choice of words to indicate to us how they really feel, what they really think, and who they really are. In taking this stance, we take the

65 Hegel’s Science of Logic also takes up these concepts. My analysis follows of Hegel’s discussion of these terms in the Phenomenology follows along with the logic of these concepts in the Science of Logic insofar as the analysis in both texts concludes that these terms are insufficient on their own. As an analysis of the concepts, the Science of Logic shows that taken separately, the concepts of the “inner” and “outer” are abstract and one-sided. As an analysis of experience, the Phenomenology shows that the experience of the inner and outer will show that what is so posited is abstract and one-sided. One difference, in terms of how I am using the terms here is that, while the concepts of “inner” and “outer” in the terms of the Science of Logic, show themselves to be deficient, the experience of interiority, in the terms of the Phenomenology, remains an essential part of our experience of ourselves. This is shown by the fact that Hegel returns to the experience of interiority well beyond its initial development in his chapter on self-consciousness. In terms of my text, “Real Individuality” and “Conscience” are two places where Hegel’s analysis of this experience will return. Consequently, while “interiority” as immediacy is shown in the Science of Logic as deficient, the Phenomenology acknowledges that, while we should rid ourselves of a one-sided notion of interiority (which is one of my primary aims in this chapter), we nevertheless cannot do without some conception of having an inner life if we are going to understand our own experience.

expressions to be signs. As signs they stand in for something else. The outer signs represent something inner, the thing with which we are really concerned (what Hegel will later call *Die Sache selbst*). In other words, whenever we take a person’s expressions to be signs, we posit a distinction between their inner and outer being. Hegel takes on a study of physiognomy and phrenology because they claim to be the science of understanding the inner via the outer.

Some theorists have argued that a successful translation from one language to another should make clear about itself that it is in fact a translation. Any translation will be a failure because it cannot give the full weight and complexity of a given word (idiom) or expression in another language, because something will always be lost in the translation from one language to another. If we compare this structure to our theme of inner and outer, we can take the “A-language” (the language to be translated) as the interiority, as what it trying to express itself, and the “B-language” (the language into which the translation is being made) as the exteriority, the possibility for expression. The B-language is always unable to receive the full sense of the A-language. This means that the A-language will always exceed the B-language’s capacity to represent it. As a result, a good or authentic translation would not exclusively aim at readability and smoothness of exposition because such “smoothness” would cover over the truth of the situation, which is that the transition has not been smooth. A genuine translation, in other words, should, at least at times, be awkward. Awkwardness, as opposed to smoothness, would make clear the eruption or break between the translation and the translated text. The difficulty in rendering a translation is much like the inner/outer distinction that Hegel is thematizing in his discussion of phrenology and how it fails to acknowledge the problem with this translation. Like translation, the break between the inner and outer in texts and in people can result in the same worry about translation. If we posit a distinction between the inner and outer, and take the inner
to have its own “language” that must be translated into external signs, we will always question
the smoothness of the expressions of the other.

Perceiving awkwardness in interpersonal relations reveals a similar phenomenon. When
we encounter a person who is acting “awkwardly”, we feel pulled into something beyond what is
being made manifest. We lean in, wrinkle our eyes, and try to get beyond the given expressions
to what is trying to be manifested. In awkwardness, the distinction between the inner and the
outer is given in the experience. The instrument being used appears to us as an instrument. We
recognize that their expressions are being used, inarticulately, in order to reveal something about
themselves.

Another’s awkwardness announces to us that there is something not being announced. It
presents the sign as merely a sign. As signs, our expressions in body and speech are used
instrumentally. As Hegel writes, “This outer, in the first place, acts only as an organ in making
the inner visible or, in general, a being-for-another” (208/§312). It shows the expressions to be
clearly “signs” and not the “real thing” with which we are concerned. When experiencing
another’s awkwardness, we experience the separation of the inner and the outer. This can feel
more genuine since this way of expressing oneself seems to respect the “purity” of the inner
being by highlighting that one’s expression is a putting into discourse of this interiority. In this
way, a choppy, murky philosophical discussion or explanation of one’s feelings can appear to be
more genuine than the most polished presentation of motivational speakers. On the other hand,
one often feels alienated from the inner world of the awkward other, because the separation from
their inner sphere is made apparent.

Conversely, when we experience the grace of another, we experience the unity of their
inner and outer being. We saw that within this conception of the appearance of the inner in the
outer, the other’s body appears as an instrument or mediator between their inner selves and our understanding of them. In the experience of another’s gracefulness, we first experience the skill the other person has. Sartre describes the graceful use of the body as one of a “precision instrument.” He writes that “In grace the body is the instrument which manifests freedom.”67 Within this attitude of observing reason, to experience another as graceful means to experience the outer as truly the expression of their inner. Watching the skillful ballerina, we experience her as expressing exactly what she has set out to express. In grace we experience a unity between the inner and the outer. In our experience, the other’s movements present themselves to us as the appearance of the other herself, and she presents herself without the body appearing as a mediating instrument. Here, writes Hegel, “The speaking mouth, the working hand, and, if you like, the legs too are the organs of performance and actualization which have within them the action qua action, or the inner as such” (208/§312). In contrast with the experience of another’s awkwardness, the appearance of the other as graceful gives us the experience of being in direct contact with the other person. We do not feel alienated from them, but have the experience of having a close connection to who they really are.

We set out to get an experience of the other’s inner being via their outer expressions. In order to do this, we posit that the inner and outer are relatable and that the outer can adequately represent the inner. However, Hegel argues, there are ways in which the outer is too separable from the inner:

Language and labor are expressions in which the individual himself no longer retains and possesses himself; rather, he lets the inner move wholly outside of him and he thus abandons it to the other. For that reason, we can just as well say that these expressions express the inner too much as we can say that they express it too little. Too much – because the inner itself breaks out in these expressions, no opposition remains between them and the inner; they do

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67 Sartre, Being and Nothingness, 519.
not merely provide an expression of the inner, they immediately provide the inner itself. *Too little* – because in speech and action the inner makes itself into an other and thereby abandons itself to the mercy of the element of transformation, which twists the spoken word and the accomplished deed and makes something else out of them than what they, as the actions of this determinate individual, are in and for themselves. (§208/312)

Experiencing the graceful act of another with the attitude of “observing reason,” which posits the ability to understand another through observation, can accomplish the goal of gaining access to the other “too well.” This is because, as we saw in the passage cited above, we remove any distinction between the inner and outer; instead of separating them, we take the outer to be the inner itself. What we wanted from the experience was a sign of the inner. We wanted to gain access to their interiority via their exterior manifestations, but what we received from the experience was what seemed to be the inner itself.

We saw earlier that the other person is defined by being an infinite interiority. As self-consciousness set out to prove in the dialectic of recognition, the self is “pure negativity.” This showed a certain “excessive nature” of the self, insofar as it is always more than any finite way that it presents itself. A simple identification of the self with its manifestations, within the framework of the inner/outer distinction and the infinite nature of selfhood, would appear to be erroneous since this unity of the inner and outer has already been ruled out in principle. It has been ruled out in principle because an identification of the inner with the outer can only ever determine itself with respect to some finite particularity. In other words, it is impossible for a finite, external determination to represent an infinite power of determining.
Not only does the graceful expression express too much, it also expresses the inner “too little.”\footnote{In Bergson’s discussion of grace in *Time and Free Will*, he describes “a kind of physical sympathy” in our experience of another’s grace (13). For example, Bergson writes that this feeling comes into play when “the graceful movements submit to a rhythm and are accompanied by music” (12).} The outer was supposed to be an expression of the particular individuality. However, as an outer, this instrument appears as a “being-for-another” (208/§312). This means that their outer appearance appeared for another. Thus, although I wanted to understand her speech as a sign of her particular individuality, what I am left with are words that I make understandable *for me*. Further, I am the one who makes sense of her speech and actions. Her words have a certain meaning *for me* (i.e. for another). Since the meaning of her words is made understandable by *me*, I become aware that her expressions are separated from her inner being. I necessarily appropriate them for my own uses. Because of my particularity, I may take her words to mean something they do not. Speech and work, writes Hegel, “let the inner get completely outside of him, leaving it to the mercy of something other than himself” (208/§312). In the experience of observing and listening to another, we become aware of the role we play in this observation.\footnote{I.e., in our conscious observation, we become self-conscious of the role we play in this experience.}

As we saw from our discussion of Stoicism, the inner being, or one’s true being, was found to be what is most properly “one’s own” and that over which one takes oneself to have absolute control. The stoic finds that she cannot control other people, including how people interpret what she says. This is therefore removed from her intimate, “ownmost self.” By saying that the outer is the presence of the inner, we still want the inner to have the kind of quality that we saw in the Stoic’s inner as absolute property. However, when speech and work are allowed to get “completely outside” of oneself, as being-for-another, the other’s “inner being” will no longer be within her sphere of control.
Since the outer expressions, as Hegel writes, “behave as separated,” we see that there is no longer a necessary connection between the inner and the outer as was originally conceived. Since, when the other’s expression turn into being-for-another, or in this case, what it means to me (its being-for-me), I take a certain degree of control over the other’s expressions. When this is realized, this person’s manifestations in principle no longer hold a necessary relationship to the inner. As this is the case, the external manifestation could be my misappropriation, a lie or ruse from the other, or, in the case of awkwardness, the other could be “too clumsy to give himself the outer aspect he really wanted, and to establish it so firmly that his work cannot be misconstrued by others” (208-209/§312). Since it only ambiguously represents the inner, as being either the inner or its expression, the outer expressions cannot be relied upon, and therefore “The organ, regarded in the light of this antithesis, does not provide the expression which is sought” (209/§312).

As “sciences” of reading the inner through the outer, physiognomy and phrenology are concerned with setting up necessary relations between the outer and the inner. These sciences seek to discover laws associated with this relationship. However, since, as we have seen, the outer can disconnect itself from the inner, the “laws” it reaches are not really laws. When I say “you don’t look like yourself,” I am referring to a way that you “should” look, but that you do not. I have established your appearance as something that is supposed to follow a certain regularity. I have set up what I wanted to be a necessary connection between your inner and outer. Consequently, I conclude that something has gone wrong in your presentation. These kinds of connections, writes Hegel, are “merely the voicing of one’s own opinion.” Hegel

70 Regarding this point, Hyppolite points out that “convention plays a part in expression” in order to explain why we cannot make laws regarding this behavior (267). This anticipates my conclusion at the end of this chapter, where I argue that what is missing from the analysis is the concept of spirit (which includes “convention” as part of its content).
continues, “These observations are on par with these: ‘It always rains when we have our annual fair’” (214/§321).

At the beginning of this chapter, interiority was defined in terms of intrapersonal communication. My inner world is the private world in which I communicate exclusively with myself, from myself to myself, within my own inner world. In looking for the other’s inner being, we would want to see an external manifestation of the other person communicating with herself. In this way we would be looking for a sign (or instrument), in Hegel’s terms, a “middle term,” which must reflect the inner. In other words, something must mediate within the inner of the individual, as something that can possibly appear to us as experience. Since we cannot peer into the soul of another, if such a thing were even possible in principle for Hegel, we must establish some kind of mediation between ourselves and others. We would be searching for something we could perceive, something visible and external, that is, separate from the action. Physiognomy looks for this “middle term” in the face because it claims that who a person is is manifested in the features of her face. Hegel distinguishes between simple and manifold externality. Manifold externality is the fate and action of the expression. This is the being-for-others that can be appropriated by others. The simple externality stands against fate and action as inner and outer. The simple externality is identified with the timbre of the voice, handwriting, facial expressions. These could be considered the “unconscious” aspects of expression. These types of “externalities,” writes Hegel, are “at the same time taken up in to the inner” (210/§316). While listening to another person, we hear what they are saying, but at the same time we pay attention to the quality of their voice and how their face accompanies what they are saying. We listen while comparing their face to their verbal expressions. Thus, insofar as we listen with a sense of this distinction, we experience listening to another within the distinction of the simple
and manifold externality of another. Like the stoic’s intrapersonal interiority, Hegel writes that we take the simple externality to represent “the individual’s speech with himself about the external action” (211/§317). Taking ourselves to have access to the other person’s personal reflection, we take ourselves to have access to the other’s intrapersonal communication.

This simple externality is thus supposed to be the presence of the person’s inner self-reflection. Nevertheless, turning our attention to the relationship of the simple externality and the inner being of the person, we realize that this externality must be a sign. Hegel describes the experience of the simple externality as a sign as an experience of “a visible invisible” (212/§318). However, although the other’s reflective sign in the simple externality may be to some extent “unconscious,” as a part of their expression and thus a part of the inner being they control, they must in some sense be in control of it. That is, it must be a part of their “volition” and so these simple externalities are not simply involuntary. Since they can in principle be within the control of a person, there can be no necessary connection established by reason between the facial expression and the inner being. If I tell a person that her face looks strained when she tells me what I take to be a lie, there is nothing that prevents her from adjusting her face when she speaks to me from now on. Similarly, in poker, if one learns a person’s “tells,” one refrains from saying what they are, since we know the other could change their behavior. That we do not reveal to others their “tells” shows us that we do understand that the sign of the simple externality has no essential connection to the inner being. The “visible invisible,” says Hegel, “can be manifested just as well in another way, just as another inner can be manifested in the same appearance” (212/§318).

Since we have nothing else to base our interpretation on, we may identify the truth of the action with how the person feels about it, with her dialogue with herself on the action. Therefore,
although we are given the action or expression, we take the truth to be what the person intended by the action rather than the action itself. Hegel writes, “the inwardness which is supposed to be the true inner is the particularity of the intention and the singleness of the being-for-self” (213/§319). Consequently, “What observation has for its objects is thus an existence which is only ‘meant,’ and it looks for laws between such existences” (213/§319). The problem here, says Hegel, is that we have set up mere conjecture or opinion (Meinen) as a scientific object. What we want is to derive scientific knowledge, but we cannot get a conclusion that is more certain than its premises. If the content of our “science” is conjecture, the laws we come up with can be no more than mere conjecture.

The aim of the sciences of physiognomy and phrenology, and the aim of observing someone’s behavior to determine their character is to determine the person’s capacity or disposition. For the physiognomist, a murderer may have a certain type of jaw. By “a murderer,” we mean a person with the potential and character such that they would commit murder. The actual fact of murder is not the aim of the science; instead, it seeks a type of character or potential. This inner intended being is, according to Hegel, “qua a being that is ‘meant’, inexpressible” (214/§320). If what we are searching for is the intended being, something separate from the action and distinct from it, it will remain “inexpressible” insofar as we have defined it as in principle distinct from the action. So long as we can say your action does one thing but your intention another, we do not have a necessary connection between the two. Only if the external being is taken as having the truth within it can we fulfill the “instinct of reason” (212/§319) to find itself in reality since reason must have access to the truth to accord with its

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71 This attitude will end up failing because it takes disposition to be an ontologically independent realm when it is not. As Macintyre has written in “Hegel on Faces and Skulls,” “A man’s character is not something independent of his actions and accessible independently of his actions. There is nothing more to his character than the sum total of what he does” (214).
basic stance of the positing an ability to relate to the world. Thus, the expression, deed, or action is taken to be the truth of the inner, “even if he deceives himself on the point, and, turning away from his action into himself, fancies that in this inner self he is something else than what he is in the deed” (215/#322). To continue, Hegel says that “It is this, and its being is not merely a sign, but the fact itself” (215/#322). This is the only way out of the problematic distinction between the true inner and the outer as sign.

Hegel continues his discussion of physiognomy and phrenology as a stance of observing reason, but the basic point has been made. The basic point that the rational observer sees by starting with the premise that the “outer is the expression of the inner” is that unless the outer is taken to be in fact the thing that matters and not just an arbitrary sign of the inner, reason will not be able to understand the other with any more rigor than expressing its own particular opinion on what the other person “really intends.” These “sciences” seek the inner mind or spirit of the person. As Hegel puts it, the final judgment of phrenology is that “spirit is.” Since phrenology is the reading of the skull, this judgment takes what immediately is to be “spirit.” This is taken to mean that “the being of spirit is a bone” (230/#343). On the one hand, we can see that this must be false. Another’s mind cannot simply be identified with the simple, passive substance of the bone. On the other hand, Hegel refers to this judgment as “the most richly spiritual” (518/#790). This is an advance in knowing over previous positions in the Phenomenology because spirit and the inner being of the other must be, not as an infinitely indeterminate possibility, but as objective actuality. Reason wanted to find itself in reality, and by identifying the other’s inner with something that is immediately present, it gives the other a location and a stake in actuality.72

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72 Harris writes, “Phrenology truly is the absolute turning point of the Phenomenology” (Harris, 605). Eric von der Luft makes this arguments as well in “The Birth of Spirit for Hegel out of the Travesty of Medicine.” He argues that
Therefore, since we now identify what is true about the other with what they do, “what it is can be said of it” (215/§322). Reason now moves on to finding the truth of the other in her activity. To say the self is a thing is spiritually insufficient insofar as we take this to mean the self is a dead, passive being (i.e., a bone). But identifying the self with a thing advances our understanding of the other because we can see that the other’s inner being is just the process of making herself into a thing. Thinghood is essential insofar as, in a basic sense, it is the end of the process of intention and action. 73

Hegel’s discussion of physiognomy and phrenology highlights the difficulty in understanding how we can bridge the gap between the observed external and the inferred internal. By setting up a distinction between the internal and external aspects of the things, consciousness has created a problem of correspondence between the two. Reason set out to find itself in the world. Consciousness does this, not by swallowing the entirety of the world into its own private world of “idealism,” but rather by positing itself as a part of the external world. Consequently, when phrenology concludes that it is its outer, this is an advance of reason because it is a movement towards more and more ability to relate itself to the world.

In conclusion, Hegel’s analysis of rational observation shows several things. The experience of listening to or observing another reveals that we play an active role in listening and that this cannot be removed from our experience of the other’s expression. Finally, Hegel will conclude that the outer must play an essential role in determining the inner. 74 The other’s Geist

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73 Consciousness is determined as self-consciousness. Hegel writes, “consciousness no longer aims to find itself immediately, but to produce itself by its own activity” (§344).
74 In the Science of Logic, Hegel writes that the inner is “a prey to otherness” (527). I take him to mean that the inner is, in fact, beholden to the other manifestation of itself.
must be identified in some way with what is accessible to both the speaker and the listener in the intersubjective world.

**Part Two: Being Understood**

*The Concept of Real Individuality*

Since I am the one who appears to have immediate access to how I feel, what I think, and what I plan to do, I take myself to have a certain privileged standpoint with respect to myself. It seems that others have no access to my intentions, and so they do not know what I know about me. Although others may interpret my actions and guess what I mean by what I say or what I do, I say that am the one who really knows what I mean, do, say, and, consequently, am. In the section, “Individuality which takes itself to be real in and for itself,” Hegel presents this standpoint towards self-knowledge through the figure of the “Real Individual.”

The Real Individual, like the title of the section suggests, is the individual that “takes itself to be real.” By “real” Hegel means that this is an attitude that takes its immediate experience of itself to be the way things really are. It may sound self-evident that a person would take herself to be real, but we can begin by distinguishing this from a very different, but also common standpoint we might take on ourselves.

We often feel the desire to become someone else. In these cases, there is someone that we want to be. For example, I come from a small town in Minnesota. Growing up in the world, I felt like I did not belong in that environment. While, to some extent, I may have participated in that particular world, I felt like I was really someone else. This was the person I needed to become.
Yet, it is equally true that this is the person who I felt I really was. The imperative, in these cases, is “become who you are.” This is strange, of course, because if one already is in such a way, one would not need to become that person. Nevertheless, this is a very familiar experience that we often have.\(^{75}\)

Let us look at another example. I may think, at a young age, that, though I have been taking piano lessons, I am really a cellist. This is what I really want to be and it is how I understand myself. Accordingly, I take myself to have the potential to be a cellist at this young age. I may realize that, order to be a cellist, I must start taking lessons and, eventually, find some success playing cello in different groups or musical institutions. This will allow me to actualize what I took myself to be. However, the Real Individual takes what she is to be within herself already, in her particular capacity as a cellist. If this particular capacity is identified at, say, the age of 10, and is developed at 30, I could perhaps say that I always was a cellist, and was lucky enough to find the teachers and occasions to display what I always knew about myself. Although at age 30 I am recognized by others as a cellist, I, as a Real Individual, knew this to be the case all along, but it just happens that it is only now that I am able to display this fact about myself to others. The Real Individual finds this kind of thinking persuasive, placing the weight of the truth of the self in the inner potential and not on the manifested actuality.\(^{76}\) Thus, the Real Individual will not feel the imperative to “become who you are” because she already takes herself to be how she immediately identifies herself.

\(^{75}\) While the goal of physiognomy and phrenology from Chapter Two was to see an identity between one’s inner experience and outer manifestation, in the figure of the Real Individual, one posits a difference between one’s inner experience and outer manifestation, taking the inner experience to be what really matters.

\(^{76}\) In accordance with this, Pinkard writes, “The result of the modern constructions of individualism thus thoroughly undermines the claim that individuals ‘find’ a potential within them that is ‘given’ and that they must then actualize; instead, it seems to require acknowledgement of the idea that they already are such individuals, and social life must orient itself around this ‘fact’ of individualism” (Pinkard, The Sociality of Reason, 113).
Like Stoicism, “Real Individuality” holds that a thing is true or valued “insofar as it matters or is important to a thinking subject.” The self takes itself to be the authority for asserting everything that is of value to itself. As we will see, it keeps what it takes to be good or true within its conception of the self, which involves a limited sphere of identity for the self. We can here distinguish between “thought” and “speech.” In thought, as a communication with myself, I come to an understanding of what I am (my particular capacity). This “inner dialogue” is a dialogue because I am capable of having an other within myself. This was a defining feature of Stoicism. As Hegel writes, “Now, it is true that for this self-consciousness the essence is neither an other than itself, nor the pure abstraction of the ‘I’, but an ‘I’ which has otherness within itself, though in the form of thought, so that in its otherness it has directly returned to itself” (139/§200). Real Individuality still retains this otherness within itself and this is why the valued form of communication can be intrapersonal communication. That is, talking to itself is the dialogue that matters. In other words, the mere appearance of oneself in interpersonal communication has already been preceded by the reality of the self in intrapersonal communication.

Self-expression in speech is for the Real Individual merely the presentation of what was already (implicitly) true. Because its own interiority is the place where the “real” dialogue takes place, dialogical expression in speech is merely the show of what has already been rehearsed and established. Consequently, speech does not reveal anything; rather, it is just the expression of what always was there. The Real Individual’s thought remains within the implicit, immediate being of the individual.

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77 Kalkavage, The Logic of Desire, 218.
Hegel describes a private “circle” of self-understanding that underlies the action of Real Individuality. Essentially, the circular difficulty that the Real Individual gets herself into is that, on the one hand, she cannot know who she is until she expresses herself, until she can take herself as an object of knowledge; but, on the other hand, in undertaking an action, she must already have a self-conception since this is what she is attempting to express. The problem with the Real Individual is that she holds onto her initial self-conception as all that matters.

We want there to be an identity between what is being expressed and the person doing the expressing. What is expressed in action must be the same thing that one sets out to express, since, as Hegel writes, “If we thought of consciousness as going beyond that, and as wanting to give actuality to a different content, then we should be thinking of it as a nothing working towards nothing” (263/§401). In understanding a person undertaking an action, say a table-builder building a table, the expression of this nature (“table-builder”) must come from the particular capacity of this person. In watching the action unfold, we are watching an action come “from out of the table-builder.” If this were not the case and the action were distinct or “beyond” the given capacity, we could no longer see an action as coming from a particular capacity and we would not have the ability to say that the expression is expressing the person. If the table-building is to be an expression of the table-builder, there must be a connection between her prior, inner nature as table-builder and her expression in the building of the table.

Similarly, one must have an idea of who one is in order to tell if one has expressed oneself well. In answering the question “Have I expressed myself?” I must first know who this

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78 This is similar to what is called “Meno’s paradox,” which can be found Plato’s dialogue, *The Meno.*
self is and what the intended expression was. I will need something in advance (a self-conception) with which I can compare the expression. Without this prior self-conception, anything I say will be an appropriate self-expression since all expression would have the same value and we would have no concept of expressing well or poorly. The Real Individual is certain of the identity between what she intends to express. Since she is so certain of herself, the actual expression does not have a say in the meaning of the expression. As Hegel writes, “He can have only the consciousness of the simple transference of himself from the night of possibility into the daylight of the present, from the abstract-it-itself into the significance of actual being, and can have only the certainty that what happens to him in the latter is nothing else but what lay dormant in the former” (266/§404). As a result, she experiences self-expression as simply a displaying of herself. While the Real Individual will experience both her inner meaning and the actual expression, any difference between the two is dismissed because the external manifestation is not experienced as dictating the meaning of the expression. As a result, writes Hegel, “It is true that the consciousness of this unity is likewise a comparison, but what is compared is merely an illusory appearance of an antithesis” (266/§404). The Real Individual does not take both sides of the action (the intention and the result) to have equal worth. For this reason, Hegel says that the Real Individual “can experience only joy in himself” (266/§404). Since nothing is at stake in self-expression for the real individual, she can only “succeed” and she experiences the simple, pure joy of self activity. The experience of the Real Individual is such that the Real Individual is not concerned with whether or not the expression came out just as intended. Instead, the real individual is merely concerned that she did in fact attempt an expression of herself. It is not “led astray” by the “mere show of a given actuality,” but stays true to “the original content of its essence” (263/§401). As Hegel writes, “action simply translated an
initially implicit being into a being that is made explicit” (263/§401). The implication is that she can know herself immediately, as Russon writes, “without the action being cognitively revelatory.”

Having collapsed the distinction between the inner capacity and the “external” expression, the Real Individual never experiences the world outside of her own mind as decisive for its knowledge of herself. The self does not leave itself but instead operates “freely within itself in a void” (§396). We can note that here consciousness remains within the interior element set out by Stoicism. We will see this worked out further insofar as consciousness will not acknowledge what is not within its own self, that is, what is not within its own immediate control.

The Dismissed Appearance of Objectivity

In the work (Werk), the Real Individual sees the appearance and is introduced to objectivity. We will see that intersubjectivity creates the world of objectivity and consciousness comes into contact with the intersubjective world through placing herself into this world through her own self-expression. Nonetheless, consciousness first attempts to dismiss this as irrelevant, using the concept of interest to bypass the objective world. In the end, the Real Individual learns that she is committed to (intersubjective) objectivity, which means she must become concerned with self-expression.

80 Consequently, it would seem that the conclusion of Hegel’s discussion of observing reason, that “spirit is a bone,” has been forgotten by consciousness and was thus only made apparent “for us.”
81 Lauer notes this connection as well, saying, of the Real Individual, “He will find the very substance of his rationality by looking into himself (shades of ‘stoicism’ and ‘skepticism’)” (189). See *A Reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology*.
Hegel argues that “to be” is to be objectively, and this means subsisting in the intersubjective world. I will follow a distinction Hegel makes, fairly consistently, between reality (realität) and actuality (Wirklichkeit). Reality is the unreflected inner world that the Real Individual takes to be what is essential (the Sache selbst). I take this to be the reason Hegel has named this figure the “Real Individual” instead of the “Actual Individual.” To be actual is to come into the “light of day” and to exist for others.

When my work becomes an actuality, it becomes so objectively, that is, for others as well. It “exists for other individualities...in other words, their interest in the work which stems from their original nature, is something different from this work’s own peculiar interest, which is thereby converted into something different” (267-268/§405). My work is “converted into something different” insofar as others take it up and appropriate it for their own uses, or see it with regard to their own particular interest. The consequence is that, although consciousness wanted to achieve permanence, it “really exhibits the reality of the individual as vanishing rather than as achieved” (268/§405). The meaning and value I attempted to attach to my work or expression vanishes its appropriation by others. I may have wanted to see myself in the world, manifested as the kind of person I took myself to be. Or, I may have wanted my work, this effect of myself, to achieve the status and meaning I set out for it. In expressing my particular capacity, the words I utter or the actions I undertake become available to others. I have a meaning (my eigner Sinn) that I have decided for these expressions; however, each person that comes into contact with them takes their meaning to be what these words or actions happen to mean to them.

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82 Hegel makes this distinction both in the Phenomenology of Spirit and in the Science of Logic, which moves from a discussion of inner and outer to a chapter on actuality. In the Phenomenology, the reader can follow Hegel’s use of these terms, but this distinction also seems to be importantly made in the naming of the figure of the “real” (reel) individual (Hegel’s title being “die Individualität, welche sich an und für sich selbst reel list”).

83 In a similar way, in the Science of Logic, when Hegel shows that the inner and outer and deficient concepts on their own, he turns to his next section, on actuality (Wirklichkeit).
The stable, enduring meaning I intended to bring about vanishes as soon as others are able to appropriate it for themselves.

The response of the Real Individual is to deny any authority to others and assert its authority of the meaning of the words or deeds it has authored.\(^8\) Hegel writes, “it is accidental if a *means* is chosen which expresses the purpose” (268-269/§407). I may happen to find the right words, but I could have just as easily chosen the wrong ones. Perhaps I was tired or could not concentrate and this is the reason why I was unable to articulate properly what is held in my inner reality. Further, I may not yet be capable of articulating my inner reality and, after years of studying, gain this capacity. It is regarded as arbitrary that I happen to now have found the proper means with which I can express myself. Upon successful articulation of the inner, I may finally identify it as what I had been trying to say all along. Although I may identify this as the correct articulation, it would not change what I “really am” or “have been all long” and so, as Hegel writes of the Real Individual, “feelings of exaltation, or lamentation, or repentance are altogether out of place” (266/§404). The result is that neither of these outcomes is essential, because the inner thought or intended actuality is found to be what is essential, what Hegel calls *Die Sache selbst*.

*Die Sache selbst*

Hegel’s discussion of the *Sache selbst* shows a similar logic to the logic of inner and outer that is found in his discussion of physiognomy and phrenology. It repeats this logic because

\(^8\) Lauer writes that “He has to be ‘objective,’ of course, but the secret of that objectivity is to ‘have as the object of rational consciousness the category as such’, i.e. his self as the heading under which all reality comes” (190). See *A Reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology*. 
the lesson from observing reason was not truly learned for consciousness. There, Hegel said, regarding the conclusion that “the reality of self-consciousness” lies in a bone, that “It has no clear consciousness, however, of what is implied in its assertion” (232/§345). As a result, a similar logic repeats itself for the Real Individual.

The Real Individual experiences the objective actuality as merely a moment of itself, “something for consciousness, not something which exists in and for itself” (270/§409). The truth of the action is how it is unified. Hegel writes, “This unity is the true work; it is Die Sache selbst which completely holds its own and is experienced as that which endures, independently of what is merely the contingent result of an individual action, the result of contingent circumstances, means, and actuality” (270/§409). All of these elements are unified into the Real Individual’s concept of itself. This is the Sache selbst, which we can call “the real thing,” (Harris) “the thing that matters” (Pinkard), or “the heart of the matter” (Miller).

Hegel describes Die Sache selbst as the universal genus in which all of the moments of one’s expression (end, means, the action, and its actuality) are contained (271/§411). It is seen as the “predicate of them all” (272/§412). The meaning I have ascribed to myself gets carried out by choosing an end, a means with which I aim for that end, the action in undertaking this goal, and the actual result of my action or expression. All of these different components are components of the meaning I have already ascribed to the thing in question. Each is a part of this intrapersonally declared genus. Since each has this original, implicit reality as that to which it belongs, what is essential to each is this pre-determined reality, its predicate.

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85 Hegel describes this as the “vanishing of the vanishing” (269/§409)
86 Translation modified.
87 I take each of these Hegel scholars to have captured something important about Hegel’s use of “Die Sache selbst.”
As a result, the Real Individual always gets the satisfaction it wants because “whichever way things turn out, it has accomplished and attained *Die Sache selbst*” (272/§412). Hegel continues, “It has at least *willed* it, i.e. it makes the purpose *qua* purpose, the mere doing which does nothing, the *Sache selbst*, and can therefore explain and console itself with the fact that all the same something was taken in hand and done” (272/§413). For example, I may say I am concerned with my friend getting a certain job. In order to help her, I propose to meet at a coffee shop to help her figure out how to best approach the job. For one reason or another, she does not show up. In this case, if I am concerned with being a good friend, I may say that “I’ve done my part,” which means that I can rest satisfied that my own “side” has been satisfied, namely of having willed something to be a certain way even though this was a “mere doing which does nothing” (272/§413). Similarly, I may not have the opportunity to help this friend or perhaps I was too busy to meet. As a Real Individual, I may still take myself to be a helpful and good person, “rationalizing” that it is merely contingent that I did not have the opportunity to exercise my good and helpful nature. The achievement is consequently “only in thought” (273/§414). Further, if my advice happens to be bad advice and she, as a result, ends up jobless, as a Real Individual I can still rest satisfied that I, at least, tried. Essentially, putting an effort in and making an expression in the world cannot be bad according to the experience of the Real Individual. As Hegel writes, “that work is to be called bad which is no work at all” (273/§414).

But, says Hegel “The truth about this integrity, however, is that it is not as honest as it seems” (273/§415). If I remain satisfied that I “did my part” regardless of the action, it is revealed that I have willed only my own affair or action (273/§415). In other words, if the result of my action does not change how I feel about the unity (of intention, means, action, and result), then it is clear that I was not actually concerned with the result. I reveal that, although I claimed
to be concerned with my friend getting a job, all I was really concerned with was displaying my own “concerned” and “helpful” nature. I reveal that this is what really mattered (*die Sache selbst*).

If we imagine a community of such “Real Individuals” we have a world where each person is simply waiting to manifest her own nature. Self-expression here, although it may seem to be aimed at another, is in truth only intrapersonal communication since *die Sache selbst* remains within the individual herself and the effects of this expression on others in objective actuality is made to be irrelevant. We then have a community of people giving speeches, with merely the appearance of dialogue and communication. As Hegel writes, “there thus enters a play of individualities with one another in which each and all find themselves both deceiving and deceived” (274/§416). Each is deceiving because each gives the appearance of concern with objective actuality, which involves the concerns of others. Each is deceived because, as each is in fact acting in objective actuality with “Real Individual” others, each is presented with the appearance of others being concerned with its own meaningfulness.

The deception becomes clear when interaction occurs. I may, for example, tell a group of people that I am interested in understanding what Hegel has to say about interiority and Real Individuality. Perhaps I am working on an article explaining this relationship. Someone may point out there are already several such articles written. When we begin to speak about this topic, they may disagree with my interpretation of Hegel or of the issues being discussed. They may assert what they take to be the case. Yet, I may protest and reveal my “Real Individuality.” I may feel uncomfortable at the feedback received and the reaction of others. This happens because, as a “Real Individual,” what I took to be important was the putting on display of my supposed

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88 An example of this would be a bad academic conference, where participants do not see themselves as engaged in a collaborative event.
insight concerning Hegel. However, these others took me to be interested, not with my putting on display an understanding of Hegel, but with actually understanding Hegel. As Hegel writes, “The others take its action for a sign of its interest in die Sache selbst as such” (274/§417). When I react against their concern with actually understanding Hegel, “they feel they have been deceived” (274/§417). However, in a community of “Real Individuals,” their apparent concern with actually understanding Hegel would reveal itself to be just as much a concern with their own selves and, perhaps, their own intellectual prowess.

Nonetheless, by entering into a conversation with the presence of being concerned with die Sache selbst as such (to be distinguished with “die Sache selbst” that placed what mattered within itself), the Real Individual contradicts itself. This is because, “Actualization is, on the contrary, a display of what is one’s own in the element of universality whereby it becomes, and should become, the affair of everyone” (275/§417). Hegel continues, “It is, then, equally a deception of oneself and of others if it is pretended that what one is concerned with is die Sache selbst alone” (275/§418). In the experience of others as essential to objective actuality, I realize that my claim over the meaning or use of a thing has no special priority and has no more weight than theirs. 89 This is acknowledged by real individuality when it recognizes the truth of objective actuality that it avoided earlier. 90 This Real Individual, says Hegel, “experiences both sides as equally essential moments, and in doing so learns what the nature of the Sache selbst really is” (276/§418).

89 In Genesis and Structure, Hypolite writes, “individuality begins with the conviction of an equality between reality and the self but comes to discover that they are opposed” (307).
90 Nevertheless he wants it to be important objectively which means to be recognized as such: “Since, finally, he seems to will only his own affair or his own action, it is again a matter of dealing with an affair in general or with an actuality that endures in its own right” (273/§415). Objective actuality is “that in which the work vanishes or what vanishes in the work, and what was supposed to give experience, as it was called, its supremacy over individuality’s own concept of itself” (270/§409).
The mistake made by Real Individuality, from the point of view of remaining consistent with its concept, is that it finds itself caring about actual things. Initially, it felt comfortable with taking its own “take” on things to be all that matters. Although it knows a concern about self-expression is a concern about the self, it also learns that it cares about the expression itself. The expression exists in objectively actuality.\(^9\) It learns, through its experience of itself, that its expression is aimed at something beyond itself. It aims at interpersonal communication, and thus it must care about the others who make up that interpersonal world. Now, the Real Individual does not simply find out she was wrong to place the “thing itself” within her own sphere of efficacy; rather, she learns that she cannot hold onto her sphere as the absolutely prioritized standpoint from which the expression will be judged. That is, she can no longer take herself to be the “genus” within which the actual expression (and means, etc.) are simply the species. Hegel also describes this when he says that “no one of these moments is subject, but rather gets dissolved in the universal ‘Sache selbst’” (275/§418). If no one of the moments is “subject,” then no particular aspect of self-expression can claim be the “true author” of the expression. Thus, while the Real Individual took herself to have “insider” access to herself, it turns out that it is only through exposing herself to others in the world that she can come to know herself.

The Sache selbst, the thing itself, must be both my thing as well as a thing for others. My personal individuality cannot claim ownership over the expression. Instead, writes Hegel, “It is rather substance permeated by individuality” (276/§418). The substance of self-expression is not my particular thing or meaningfulness (eigner Sinn), nor is it an alien being that confronts

\(^9\) As Kain writes, “The deed is not the mere outer expression of an inner intention. The deed is the fact itself (die Sache Selbst)” (81). See Hegel and the Other.
individuals. It is “the essence which is the essence of all beings, viz. spiritual essence” (276/§418).\footnote{It is important to pay attention to this because, as Hegel writes in the preface, “everything turns on grasping and expressing the true not merely as substance, but also equally as subject” (14/§17). “If thought does not unite itself with the being of substance, and apprehends immediacy or intuition as thinking, the question is still whether this intellectual intuition does not again fall back into inert simplicity, and does not depict actuality itself in a non-actual manner” (14/§17). Also, “In die Sache selbst, then, in which the interfusion of individuality and objectivity has itself become objective, self-consciousness has come into possession of its true concept, or has attained to a consciousness of its substance” (271/§411).}

\textit{Conclusion}

Initially, the Real Individual took itself to have immediate introspective access to itself. However, in Hegel’s text, the Real Individual learns that there is a problem with self-expression. Although it thought self-expression was simply the display of itself to itself in externality, it learns that this can only be, at best, half of the story. It finds that the Sache selbst, the actual expression of itself, is a “spiritual” object, that is, it learns self-expression can only take place within a context of others. We saw that when consciousness treated itself as a “Real Individual,” the context of expression was irrelevant because what mattered, die Sache selbst, was her sincerity. She could try to express her nature well, but because of problems with the context or particularities (means, etc.) it may not be able to be expressed. This, she said, was not her concern because she “did what she could.” However, now that Hegel has shown that we must realize the difference between reality and actuality, and that both the inner and outer
manifestations are important in their unity,\textsuperscript{93} the context and particularities of the expression must be taken as essential.

Through our phenomenological observation of the Real Individual, we learn that one should not deceive oneself but should acknowledge that the \textit{Sache selbst} is not only the sincere intention, but also the means, actuality, and end of the expression. As a result, when trying to preserve the independence of one’s expressions, that is, by being concerned with the actual self-expression, one consents to another’s control by acknowledging that one does not have absolute authority over the expression. Self-expression is found to be a form of communication, and this communication must be interpersonal. In our observation of the Real Individual, we have seen what the bondsman experienced implicitly, that only another’s recognition of its works makes them objective and enduring. The thing that matters cannot be taken out of the context in which it occurs.

Looking at the experience of consciousness from the perspective of an observer and an actor, or a listener and a speaker, showed us two things. First, when we hold a distinction between our inner and outer, we must regard the outer as revelatory of what we are. When we feel a discrepancy between the two, and wish to hold onto what our inner intention and supposition of our own meaning is, we should keep in mind the lessons learned in Hegel’s discussion of Phrenology and the Real Individual. Immediate introspective access to oneself is the claim of both the stoic and the Real Individual. This immediacy is unreflected and “real”; it has not yet paid attention to actuality (\textit{Wirklichkeit}) or the \textit{Sache selbst}. Secondly, both of these experiences show that there is a more fundamental layer to our interpersonal relations. Hegel

\textsuperscript{93} In his discussion of the inner and outer in the \textit{Science of Logic}, Hegel writes that “these two identities are only the sides of one totality” (527).
calls this “spirit.” & 94 & Although reason posited the fundamental understandability of another, these experiences show that reason alone is inadequate to show how understanding occurs and meaningfulness takes place. What this shows is that dialogue must involve more than just speaking and listening. Hegel’s analysis of experience points to a more fundamental level of reality called spirit.

A discussion of spirit is thus called for, but first we will look more deeply into what Hegel has to say about the “innermost” nature of the self. What we will see is that the innermost affirmation of oneself ultimately reveals otherness within our innermost self. Chapter Three will focus on this point. In Chapter Four, I will discuss spirit and the practical implications of the nature of our innermost selves and how we can know them.

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94 Lauer, in *A Reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology*, says that “his spirit is his true reality, and no thing can express that” (175).
CHAPTER THREE
The Innermost Self and Openness to the Outside

Introduction

Chapter Two showed that the stance of reason, which thinks that we can gain access to the inner of another or oneself purely through a rational operation of the mind, is inadequate. Chapter Three will continue this critique of introspection, by arguing that the reason one cannot have immediate introspective access is not fundamentally an epistemological problem. Ontologically, what is essential to the self lies beyond the self. This is shown in what Hegel takes to be the most immediate and concrete experience of what would most truly count as one’s own. This is the experience of conscience.

My analysis of conscience will have two parts. The first part is concerned with knowing, and argues that for Hegel conscience is an experience that can be identified as ultimately “unhappy,” which means it is separated from its essential ground. In this first part, “Confession and the Persistence of the Unhappy Consciousness,” I compare Hegel’s analysis of Stoicism, Skepticism, and the Unhappy Consciousness, to his discussions of the Beautiful Soul, the Judging Consciousness, and Confession. I do this in order to show how the recognition of confession has retained the Unhappy Consciousness’s recognition that the ultimate ground of
oneself is not within one’s grasp and one must open oneself outward in order to enact the grounding of oneself. I begin with “Self-consciousness and Impersonal Negativity,” where I return to the basic stance of self-consciousness as infinitely beyond any way that it manifests itself as a finite person. I will characterize this as an “impersonal” stance because it removes any “personal” elements from its self-conception. I then turn to a discussion of Hegel’s figure of the “Unhappy Consciousness” as a stance which is wholly divided from the parts of itself that are personal and impersonal. This inner diremption is experienced as a division between itself and a beyond. This division is developed from the standpoint of a moral actor, in my next section, “The Standpoint of morality.” Here we see the conflict in moral action, where we feel divided between being universal and impersonal rational actors and concrete and particular personal actors. After I have developed this character of moral action and its relation to self-consciousness, I will match the three figures from Hegel’s discussion of self-consciousness with three figures from his discussion of morality and conscience in order to show how the logic of self-consciousness is at play in the logic of moral action. I will begin with “The Stoic and the Beautiful Soul.” Here, I will show how these two figures show the insufficient and one-sided nature of this conception of selfhood in a way consistent with the discussion of the Real Individual in Chapter Two. I will then look at the skeptic and the Judging Consciousness, two figures which also show themselves to be inadequate because they have an abstract conception of what it means to exist in the actual world. Finally, at the end of Part One I will compare the beautiful soul to Hegel’s discussion of conscience and confession. What we will see is that these figures recognize the extent to which the conditions for our agency lie, in part, beyond us. This recognition is characteristic of the Unhappy Consciousness.
Part Two is concerned with action, and argues that for Hegel conscience involves the affirmation of the contingent ground of oneself that remains beyond one’s grasp. In this second part, “Conscience and the Oracular Affirmation of Contingency in Action,” I analyze three standpoints that Hegel shows we can take toward the contingency of moral action. I compare the oracle, Socrates’ daimon, and Hegel’s account of conscience in order to show that even in Hegel’s account of conscience we retain some of the features of the oracle and the daimon, namely, that there is a level of reality that, while essential to us as actors, remains beyond our grasp.

Part One: Confession and the Persistence of the Unhappy Consciousness

Introduction

Many of the contemporary challenges to Hegel’s philosophy center on the assumption that Hegel’s philosophy results in a “final resolution.” This final resolution is claimed to be a stable and resolved endpoint where all contradictions have been surpassed and one has reached “absolute knowing.” However, what I will show is that the shape of consciousness that Hegel calls the Unhappy Consciousness posits a final resolved “God’s eye view” as the final

95 For example, in his book The French Hegel, Baugh argues that much of the French reception of Hegel has consisted in prioritizing the stage of the Unhappy Consciousness in a way that Hegel did not. Instead of being merely a stage that is allegedly surpassed, Baugh takes many French philosophers (like Wahl, Koyré, Sartre, and Derrida) to seek a philosophy that would give more prominence to the stage of the Unhappy Consciousness than Hegel has. He writes, for example, “Resistance to appeasement and reconciliation is a key theme in the philosophies of the unhappy consciousness we have considered so far…They also argue, against Hegel, that the sort of ‘unhappy consciousness’ they have in view is not a surpassable historical stage, or a process subject to dialectical mediation and supersession” (138). Or, more specifically, Baugh will say that “Derrida departs from Hegel, as Wahl did, by refusing any ‘reconciliation’ in a ‘synthesis’ that would close the gap between intention and meaning, between self and self; his unhappy consciousness remains in the desert instead of making the Greco-Christian return ‘home’ to an origin” (124). Similarly, Skempton writes that “The Hegelian systemic totality regards itself as unlimited, infinite, and all-inclusive, whereas Derrida regards the system’s self-knowledge as unconsciously repressing its own structural and textual operations that necessarily involve exclusion and restriction” (76). See Alienation After Derrida.
reconciliation. If united with this standpoint, one would have attained the “final resolution” many think Hegel’s purports to have achieved in absolute knowing. In Part One, I will argue that the opposite is in fact the case for Hegel and that a close study of the text reveals that the shape of the Unhappy Consciousness is not surpassed and left behind; instead, both the experience of the Unhappy Consciousness and the logic leading up to it are repeated in the last stages of Hegel’s analysis of spirit. Thus, in Hegel’s analysis of the Unhappy Consciousness, this purported final resolution is found to be impossible. In my discussion of the end of Hegel’s chapter on spirit, I will argue that although some parts of the Unhappy Consciousness are resolved, the union with a final truth does not take place. The final or “absolute” standpoint that is seen at the end of Hegel’s analysis of “spirit” inherits a contradiction much like the Unhappy Consciousness, and this is where Hegel shows the persistence of the “unhappiness” in his phenomenology of spirit.96

The logical development of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* ends with Hegel’s discussion of conscience as a shape of “self-certain spirit.” Here, a person finds herself being “self-certain” in the sense that she is certain that her experience of moral necessity is absolutely valid. This section, subtitled, “the beautiful soul, evil, and its forgiveness,” moves through many different standpoints of morality, the last two of which are “confession” and “forgiveness.” In this first part, I will show the persistence of the Unhappy Consciousness in Hegel’s phenomenological study of “spirit.” Specifically, I will focus on the recognition that takes place in confession. I will show that the movement that takes place in the logic of self-consciousness from Stoicism to Skepticism and to the Unhappy Consciousness can be seen as repeated, albeit in

96 In line with my reading, Lauer writes, in a discussion of absolute knowing, “In a certain sense, at the end of the chapter on ‘spirit,’ where moral consciousness has become ‘conscience,’ embodied in the ‘beautiful soul,’ there was already consciousness of what true knowing has to be, i.e., a consciousness dependent on nothing extraneous to itself for its content, a self-consciousness which both gives itself the content it has and is conscious of doing just that” (256). See *A Reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*. 
a transformed way, in the logic of morality shown through Hegel’s figures of the Beautiful Soul, Judging Consciousness, and the recognition of conscience in confession. These figures present different tensions that we can find through a phenomenological analysis of our experience of self-consciousness and morality.

One of the main tensions I will focus on is between what I call the “personal” and “impersonal” standpoints. When we take something “personally” or refer to our “personality” we seem to refer to ourselves as unique individuals. If someone attacks me personally she is attacking me as this a particular person. When someone tells you not to take something personally, they likely mean that the offense was not directed at you as a particular person, but was either accidentally applied to you because of the mood of the offending individual, or what was said happens to any “one” in the situation, regardless of who they are. Thus, by “personal,” I will refer to the contingent, historical, and particular nature of singular self-conscious beings. An “impersonal” pronoun, on the contrary, is supposed to refer to any given person. Instead of speaking personally in the second person “you,” a person may speak of “one” in order to avoid referring to the particular individual, but to the class “person” to which they belong. Identifying with the class of “person” involves identifying with a universal concept of person, and, accordingly, is an impersonal designation. Thus, by “impersonal,” I mean the stance of universality that attempts to be free of any particularity. The tension I will focus on draws on the fact that, on the one hand, we are a part of groups and categories and we share the same structure of self-consciousness as other self-conscious beings do.  

97 Iain Macdonald discusses the role of nature in this tension by contrasting the “transcendental” and “empirical” readings of Hegel. These correspond, respectively, to my use of “impersonal” and “person.” Macdonald argues that each of these positions is one-sided and to truly grasp what Hegel is doing is to see both of these positions as half-truths. See “Nature and Spirit in Hegel’s Anthropology: Some Idealist Themes in Hegel’s Pragmatism.”
engage in action, we cannot do it universally, as a “one.” That is, if I am going to choose to do something, I must choose to do it, and so I must engage as a person.

In what follows, I will begin by focusing on Hegel’s logical development from Stoicism to the Unhappy Consciousness in order to show how recognizing the tension between the personal and impersonal standpoints is pivotal for understanding Hegel’s approach to self-consciousness. In Hegel’s analysis of Stoicism, which immediately follows the analysis of self-consciousness as a struggle between the independence and dependence of self-consciousness that was discussed in Chapter One, Hegel’s *Phenomenology* reveals that self-consciousness takes an attitude oriented towards the denial of the personal elements of itself. We saw this in Chapter One, when consciousness set out to prove it was “pure negativity.” Consciousness attempted to show that it did not depend on any particular aspect of itself; instead, it was free from or beyond any finite determination of itself. However, throughout Hegel’s phenomenology, the experience of consciousness shows a greater and greater realization of the necessity of the personal nature of actual experience. This contradiction is powerfully shown in Hegel’s analysis of the “Unhappy Consciousness,” where consciousness finds itself uncontrollably finite and personal, and consequently attempts to unify itself with the impersonal standpoint. In the end, I will show how this stance of impersonal negativity is reevaluated, and, instead of turning away from itself into the fantasy of impersonal existence, the stance of confession takes up its personal nature as an acknowledgement of this necessary standpoint of human experience. I will begin by collecting the basic elements of self-consciousness that go into the Unhappy Consciousness, Stoicism, and Skepticism.
Self-consciousness and Impersonal Negativity

As we saw in Chapter One, self-consciousness arises as the attempt to be a pure negative standpoint, independent from any particularity. “Negativity” is a significant concept in Hegel’s philosophy. The exact way in which Hegel employs the concepts “negative” and “negativity” change, but the basic sense in which I am using “negativity” arises out of the project of self-consciousness and is, as Kalkavage has put it, “the will to negate the world in order to affirm itself.” This is the claim of absolute independence that is made by self-consciousness that I began to examine in Chapter One. Since absolute independence requires that one be free from any particular way of manifesting oneself, to be tied to one way of being would mean that one is not absolutely free, that is, free without any restriction. The negative standpoint, consequently, is required by this conception of independence. Only by negating everything can self-consciousness be the pure negative power it takes itself to be.

In the section of the Phenomenology entitled “Lordship and Bondage” that was discussed in Chapter One, each being sets out to prove to itself that it is a self-conscious being and this resulted in an attempt on the part of each to dominate the other. Each being recognized that it appeared to the other as an object. In order to rise above this objectification, each, in Hegel’s words, “must supercede this otherness of itself” (128/§180). This “otherness” is its appearance to the other. It sees itself in the eyes of the other, as an object for the other, and seeks to rid itself of this objectivity because being an object for another means having oneself tethered to how one

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98 I will not attempt to give a full treatment of this concept; instead I will focus on the concept of negativity as it will relate to my arguments. The reader can look to Karin de Boer, On Hegel: The Sway of the Negative, Bowman, Hegel and the Metaphysics of Absolute Negativity, and Zizek, Hegel: The Restlessness of the Negative, George di Giovanni, “Negativity, Negation.”
appears to another. Thus, in order to be self-conscious beings, each recognizes that he must negate any particular way that he manifests himself, including his body. Though the lord won the struggle to the death and came to dominate the bondsman, the lord’s success is mitigated by the fact that his personal desires count as what is essential for him, which means he has not been able to negate all of the contents of his personal being. Since he never underwent the essential education of fear and servitude, he was never able to receive the discipline that is truly required for liberation from finite desires. The bondsman, however, having undergone the education involved in fear and service, successfully emancipates himself from his own particular desires. This results in an advance in the concept of self-consciousness because it frees oneself from being tied to one’s own desires.

In his confrontation with the fear of death embodied in the lord, Hegel says that the bondsman has “trembled in every fibre of his being” (134/§194) and has lost all of the content of his personal nature. As a result of having been emptied of his personal life, that is, his ability to have his own desires and views about what should and should not be done, he takes on the personal nature of the lord. The advance of the position of the bondsman to that of the lord comes from the bondsman being forced to empty himself of his personal nature. It is worth noting that, as this will come up later in my discussion of the third form of the Unhappy Consciousness, the bondsman’s advance on the concept of self-consciousness comes by inhabiting the personal nature of the lord. Since the lord wins the battle, his desires are what count. This means that the bondsman must take on the lord’s desires as his desires. What is important to note here is that the slave empties himself of his desires, not by ceasing to desire anything whatsoever, but by taking on the desires of the lord. Consequently, it is not the case that the bondsman has no personal nature; he just does not have his own.
After Hegel has shown the origin of self-conscious negativity in “Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage,” he continues to develop this theme with a discussion of stoicism. After the bondsman comes to have a sense of himself as a self-conscious being who is freed from his dependence on his own desire or that of the lord, the next logical shape of consciousness is stoicism. The next logical step is stoicism because once one has developed a sense of an inner life, one can continue this project of self-conscious negativity within the purity of an inner world that is completely one’s own. The stoic relates to the world negatively and takes this pure negativity towards particularity as its principle. The Stoic does this by answering the question, as we saw Epictetus put it in Chapter 2 of the Handbook, “What is mine?” What is one’s own is identified with the purely impersonal realm of thinking. The aspects of it that make it this particular person and not a universal self-consciousness need to be disassociated from it in order to maintain its independent stance because by allowing one’s identity to involve these particularities, one is made dependent on them. As Hegel writes, for the stoic to “entrench itself in some particularity” is to remain “in bondage” (138/§199). Being tied to “some particularity” keeps one “in bondage” because, as we saw in Chapter One, one does not fully recognize oneself as a self-conscious being if one is reducible to a given set of particularities. This, we can recall, continues the basic aim represented by both figures in the “struggle for recognition” where each being asserted itself as free of any personal particularity, which included being free from a dependence on life. If I am just a writer, student, teacher, or pianist, I will not feel the freedom of thought associated with self-consciousness that is important to the stoic. In order to be free, it must treat its particularities as indifferent; it must identify itself with the free realm of impersonal thinking, instead of the dependent life of personal particularity.
In order to deny its attachment to the external world and maintain a stance of self-conscious negativity, the stoic denies that its own reality is defined by these externals, including its own body. This means that it does not take anything that it encounters outside of its own mind to be essential to who it is. Everything external is seen to be merely a passing object of experience, while its own mind and capacity for thinking is seen as what is essential and all that matters. The stoic’s view is that if it places an importance on external goods, it gives up control of itself. In response to this, the stoic retreats inward and holds onto what it takes itself to have absolute control over, its mind.

Despite the claim to be an individual with an inner life in accord with impersonal universality, Hegel shows that the position of stoicism does not carry its own recognition of the primacy of self-conscious negativity through to completion. It is from the position of skepticism, the next shape of consciousness that arises after Stoicism in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, that this critique can be seen clearly. The shape of skepticism arises out of the shape of stoicism because the stoic is found to inadequately represent the impersonal standpoint.\(^\text{100}\) The standpoint of the stoic is still personal because its critique and disassociation do not go far enough. The stoic remains at a distance from the particular world of dependent things, but still holds its *own* standpoint to be one that was universal and impersonal. While it cannot place any certainty in the outside world, it does take itself to have found a space within itself for self-certainty.

Skepticism, writes Hegel, “is *in itself* the negative, and that is the way it must exhibit itself” (140/§202).\(^\text{101}\) The skeptic is a further development of self-consciousness or self-
conscious negativity because she attempts to maintain a standpoint of negativity even towards herself. The stoic held just one position among many by taking herself to be the one essential reality. Skepticism is “the realization of that of which stoicism is merely the concept” because the skeptic recognizes that to attain true independence would also mean to take the standpoint of negativity towards herself (140/§202). The skeptic argues that, not only must one be independent of everything outside of oneself in order to attain the independence of thought, but one must also be independent of one’s own subjective standpoint. For the skeptic, the stoic was not impersonal enough, because she still took her own independence to be a stable position within which she can reside. She claims that all positions claiming to be universal are really just different subjective points of view. Further, for the skeptic no subjective point of view could truly succeed because it merely comes from one particular subject who cannot speak on behalf of the universal. The skeptic thus takes herself to have achieved an independence of thought that was not achieved by the stoic. The stoic was able to think freely because she took her essential reality to be thinking. However, for the skeptic, this is her thinking and thus to be free of the singular standpoint and to more truly represent the impersonal universal, one must be independent from one’s one standpoint as well. The stoic was concerned with ridding itself of its dependence on external things. It took this to be the source for its independence. The skeptic takes itself to have achieved independence from her own standpoint and thus has more truly attained the standpoint of impersonal, independent thinking.

However, what the skeptic realizes is that her standpoint of independence could not be maintained concretely. Hegel writes, “It speaks about absolute disappearance, but that ‘speaking about’ itself exists, and this consciousness is the disappearance spoken about. It speaks about the reality of any disturbing alien determinations of its thought. Instead of taking upon itself the role of determining, it nullifies what is determinate” (138). See A Reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology.
nullity of seeing, hearing, and so on, and it itself sees, hears, and so on. It speaks about the nullity of ethical essentialities, and then she makes those essentialities themselves into the powers governing its actions” (143/§205). The position of the skeptic is found to exist only in its mind. Hegel’s argument here is reminiscent of Descartes argument in the Mediations. Descartes found that while it may attempt to be skeptical with regards to its own existence, its own thinking refutes this claim. Simply by paying attention to its own experience of itself and noting the fact that it thinks, Descartes found that it cannot remain skeptical about its existence. Thus, though the position of skepticism seemed to be an advanced form of independence of self-consciousness, this conception of independence is ultimately only a fantasy of the mind. Concrete experience refutes the skeptic’s claims.

Hegel then moves on to an even more concrete point. Here, he previews the development of self-consciousness into his chapter on spirit and its ultimate development into what he calls “Spirit Certain of itself: Morality.” Hegel moves from the certainty of one’s own existence, to sensation, and then to ethical certainty and a development from less concrete to more concrete experience of itself. While I will return to this experience later in this chapter, it is worth noting now that Hegel argues that the skeptical position towards “ethical essentialities” is refuted by the fact that one finds that one must act out of an understanding of ethical essentialities. I will return to this point later in my discussion of conscience. In conclusion, although she wishes to maintain an impersonal standpoint free from particularity, the skeptic reveals that she cannot control the fact that she always finds herself living out some personal content that is unable to be obliterated by her negative power. It is by recognizing the absolute asymmetry between its impersonal ideal and the concrete experience it has of a thinking, feeling, and ethical person that the skeptic becomes the Unhappy Consciousness.
The Unhappy Consciousness

The Unhappy Consciousness is a position that holds onto the results of the skeptic’s experience. She accepts the fact that she is in fact a concrete, finite person who is unable to identify herself as an impersonal thinking thing. However, this form of consciousness still holds the impersonal, universal standpoint as an ideal. This standpoint is still ideal because consciousness still maintains that the reality that it has, as changing, finite, and personal, is unessential and ungrounded and the unchangeable, impersonal universality is the essential grounding aspect of reality. This standpoint of consciousness is “unhappy” because it is separated from what it takes to be the essential ground for its reality.\textsuperscript{102} Since the Unhappy Consciousness still holds onto the criteria for impersonal certainty maintained in skepticism, she recognizes that she cannot provide any solid foundation for her personal nature.\textsuperscript{103} Although she maintains a standard of impersonality for true being, she finds herself necessarily personal. Whereas the skeptic implicitly wavered between a subjective and objective, or personal and impersonal, point of view, the Unhappy Consciousness experiences reality explicitly as just this oscillation between the personal and impersonal points of view, between the groundless personal life, and the grounded impersonal beyond.\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{102} Hegel refers to its unhappy character as divided into two (entzweite). It is not one and is always separated from what it takes to be essential: “it is thus driven out of each in turn in the very moment when it imagines it has successfully attained to a peaceful unity with the other” (144/§207).

\textsuperscript{103} Because, as Hegel writes, “it identifies itself with the changeable consciousness” (145/§208).

\textsuperscript{104} As Hegel writes, “since both for it are equally essential and contradictory, it is merely the contradictory movement in which one opposite does not come to rest in its opposite, but in it only produces itself afresh as an opposite” (145/§208).
It is worth emphasizing the necessary tension involved in holding onto both of these standpoints. On the one hand, the unhappy consciousness maintains that if a true, universal standpoint were to be possible, this would have to come from the impersonal; but, on the other hand, she maintains that she herself undeniably lives as a contingent, personal standpoint. The Unhappy Consciousness experiences both of these standpoints as essential. One could imagine consciousness taking up an attitude that its standpoint was personal and therefore unessential. This attitude might then seek to root itself out of its contingent particularities and become the essential. This, however, was already seen in the standpoints of the stoic and the skeptic. Their attempts to root themselves out of a contingent, personal standpoint resulted in finding an even more fundamental sense in which the way they are able to take up a relation to themselves and the world is personal and contingent. The Unhappy Consciousness is an advance over stoicism and skepticism because it recognizes the necessity of the personal dimension of ourselves. Since the Unhappy Consciousness recognizes the two standpoints of impersonal universality and personal particularity as external to each other, it takes itself to be the unessential, personal standpoint that is estranged from the unchangeable universal. It is this estrangement that makes it “unhappy.”

Hegel identifies three main phases to the experience of Unhappy Consciousness. First, it is opposed to the Unchangeable universal and this Unchangeable is “merely the alien essence passing sentence on it” (145/§210). In the second phase, this Unchangeable beyond is represented by a finite being. In one way, we can see this as what is represented in Christian imagery by the figure of Jesus, who represented the Unchangeable in changeable, finite form; this finite being is also represented in Christian practice by a priest who mediates between the believer and the beyond which is separated from it. In the third phase, consciousness recognizes
that it is in principle no different from the finite being it took to represent the Unchangeable.

When Hegel discusses the Unhappy Consciousness in his chapter on self-consciousness, he primarily discusses the second phase of the Unhappy Consciousness. Hegel thus uses “Unhappy Consciousness” both to refer to the second phase of the Unhappy Consciousness, where an individual is opposed to a finite individual, and as the entire 3-phase movement.\(^\text{105}\) I will primarily focus on Hegel’s exposition of the second form of the Unhappy Consciousness, though we will also see how analyzing this second form will lead the third form and the standpoint of “reason.”

As we have said, the Unhappy Consciousness experiences itself as inwardly disrupted. Within itself it has the experience of changeable finitude and an infinite unchangeability. While it holds the ideal of universal thought, it experiences its necessity as finite and changeable. In order to attempt to unite with the beyond that both the stoic and skeptic thought themselves to be, it must disassociate itself from the aspects of itself that are finite and changeable. Thus, its experience must be denied. The result is self-denial.

Like the bondsman, the Unhappy Consciousness is able to empty itself of its personal content by taking on the content of another.\(^\text{106}\) For both the bondsman and the Unhappy Consciousness, the others with which they attempt to unite are posited as the essential beings.

For the bondsman this other is the lord, for the Unhappy Consciousness, the other is the

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\(^\text{105}\) For a concise explanation of this point, see Russon, *The Self and its Body*, 24.

\(^\text{106}\) The initial logic of this attempt is a failure because it in attempting to be free and unite what its takes to be the universal and unchangeable standpoint, it continues to experience its personal self. This is described as an attempt to “raise itself” out of its personal consciousness. Hegel also describes it in this way: “The Unchangeable that enters into consciousness is through this very fact at the same time affected by individuality, and is only present with the latter; individuality, instead of having been extinguished in the consciousness of the Unchangeable, only continues to arise therefrom” (§209). However, this “emptying of itself” is possible when Hegel looks at another being as the impersonal unchangeable other, which he calls a “mediator.” Hegel writes, “In the mediator, then, this consciousness frees itself from action and enjoyment so far as they are regarded as its own. As a separate independent extreme, it rejects the essence of its will, and casts upon the mediator or minister its own freedom of decision, and herewith the responsibility for its own action” (154/§228).
Unchangeable, made present to the Unhappy Consciousness as the mediator.\textsuperscript{107} For the bondsman, inhabiting the personality of the lord enabled him to rise above his immediate being and identify himself as a self-conscious being. The Unhappy Consciousness faces a similar problem since it is in recognizing her undeniably personal nature that the Unhappy Consciousness is unhappy.\textsuperscript{108} The bondsman seemed to be united with the lord and had rid himself of his unessential nature; yet, in work the bondsman gained an undeniable sense of himself as the one working on natural existence. The first two stages of the Unhappy Consciousness’s relation to the individual mediator reveal a similar structure. In both feeling and in work, the Unhappy Consciousness returns to herself, unable to truly empty herself of her unessential being.\textsuperscript{109} The third stage of the Unhappy Consciousness’s relationship with the mediator takes a different approach, although also with limited success. While the forms of self-consciousness that preceded the third stage of the Unhappy Consciousness’s relation to the mediator held optimism for their ability to rid themselves of these particularities, the changeable and personal elements of herself, the Unhappy Consciousness gives up on this standpoint as one of her possibilities. Instead, the Unhappy Consciousness looks to a beyond to accomplish this task for her.\textsuperscript{110} In acting and feeling one becomes aware of one’s personal and changeable nature, and it is in this experience of itself that it constantly sees itself enacting the rift between its

\textsuperscript{107} The mediator appears as what can concretely relate consciousness to the unchangeable: “this middle term is itself a conscious being, for it is an action which mediates consciousness as such” (154/§228). There are many allusions to the Medieval Catholic world in Hegel’s exposition of the Unhappy Consciousness. As I argue in other sections, Hegel’s argument requires us to connect our own experiences with his phenomenological analysis and so his discussion of the Unhappy Consciousness cannot be reduced to a historical period that has fallen away. Burbidge makes this argument in detail in “‘Unhappy Consciousness’ in Hegel: An Analysis of Medieval Catholicism?”

\textsuperscript{108} Hegel says that it continues to experience its “unhappy” condition as it continues to experience itself as an individual. See 145/§209-210.

\textsuperscript{109} Unlike the bondsman, the Unhappy Consciousness does not have the experience of itself in work: “But the Unhappy Consciousness merely finds itself desiring and working; it is not aware that to find itself active in this way implies that it is in fact certain of itself” (150/§218).

\textsuperscript{110} This is different for the bondsman because this was done for the bondsman against his immediate will. The Unhappy Consciousness takes on the content of the unchangeable beyond via the mediator willingly, as she now knows that this must be accomplished. This act is described by Hegel and a “surrender” (155/§229).
personal, changeable self and the sense in which it is an impersonal, unchangeable beyond
(145/§209). Consciousness at this point gives up on the idea that it can stop acting and feeling
and turns to the mediator to do the acting and feeling for it. 111 Hegel writes, “In the mediator,
then, this consciousness frees itself from action and enjoyment so far as they are regarded as its
own” (154/§228). The mediator is given “its own freedom of decision, and herewith the
responsibility for its own action” (154/§228).

The task the Unhappy Consciousness sets for itself is no longer one of achieving the
universal standpoint via its own initiative. It is “unhappy,” precisely because it sees the
impossibility of this. As Hegel writes, “instead of being a universal, [it] is the lowest individual;
we have here only a personality (persönlickeit) confined to its own self and its own petty actions,
a personality brooding over itself, as unhappy as it is impoverished” (153/§225).112 A solo union
with the unchangeable was already attempted and was proven ineffective since in action or
feeling it experiences itself as acting and feeling and thus consciousness fails to renounce itself.
Although the Unhappy Consciousness has given up on the possibility of inhabiting the
impersonal standpoint itself, she nevertheless posits its existence. This is done by forming a
representation of the impersonal, or what Hegel calls the “unchangeable” standpoint, in an
unattainable beyond.

This standpoint of the Unhappy Consciousness seeks to resolve the problem of uniting
with the impersonal beyond with its unavoidably personal nature by allowing another to be
responsible for its personal content. In order to do this, the Unhappy Consciousness makes a
three-fold sacrifice of her “personality” in order to become “impersonal.” First she “outsources”

111 In “What is Enlightenment?” Kant expresses a similar position which he describes as unenlightened
“immaturity.” Importantly, this the resolution of the Unhappy Consciousness is reason. Like Kant, Hegel finds this
attitude immature and is resolve by asserting reason as mature self-possession.
112 Translation modified.
her decision-making. Second, she denies any property or pleasure that resulted from her identification with the unchangeable, and third, she denies herself by following practices she does not understand (155/§229).

This last sacrifice is especially important. The Unhappy Consciousness realizes she must have personal content and so takes on the content of the mediator because she takes this to be the content of an impersonal and unchangeable beyond. If she were to understand why she was acting in the way she was, she would again posit herself as essential and give herself the ability to now relate to herself. This second form still maintains that one must have a personal side, but also that any stability or ground for this finite personality could only be gained from the impersonal, unchangeable beyond. Therefore, although she has a personal content, since she does not even understand the meaning of her “personality,” she has also “outsourced” her ability to relate to this content. She has become “impersonal” by becoming “not-this-person.” As Hegel writes, “The action, since it follows upon the decision of someone else, ceases, as regards the doing or the willing of it, to be its own” (154/§228). By “outsourcing” her personal content, the unhappy consciousness is able to posit a ground for the content of her own person. She has emptied herself of her own personal nature, not by not having one, but by allowing another to determine it.

Unlike other forms of self-consciousness, in this stage of the Unhappy Consciousness, consciousness does not try to rid herself of any personal content, just of her own content. Therefore, when her norms and beliefs are supplied and understood by the unchangeable or an agent of the unchangeable, she posits that the content of her person is made up of universality. To her this means that she, as a singular being, has been filled with the universal and has taken up the universal standpoint. The negative stance that the Unhappy Consciousness takes towards
her own will implies a positive positing of a universal will (155-156/§230). Having taken on the “personality” of the impersonal, insofar as Unhappy Consciousness renounces itself and lets itself be filled with the impersonal beyond by renouncing itself and letting another reason and understand for it, the Unhappy Consciousness is united with the impersonal beyond. This is the third form of the Unhappy Consciousness. This is the standpoint that allows consciousness to come into communion with what is external to it. It no longer takes itself to be an individual alienated from what it takes to be the external, unchangeable world; instead, it now sees itself as constrained within the impersonal stance which takes itself to be equally as impersonal as the world around it. This is the stance of reason. The stance of reason makes it possible for the Unhappy Consciousness to rid itself of its alienation because this standpoint takes itself to inhabit the impersonal standpoint that becomes identified with the standpoint of rationality.

We can now pause and examine to what extent the Unhappy Consciousness has been relieved of its “unhappiness.” Hegel writes that this threefold self-renunciation found in the second stage of the Unhappy Consciousness “obtains relief from unhappiness (Unglück) “in itself” (155/§230). Since the certainty and understanding of “union” with the absolute are not its own (but in the minister), consciousness cannot truly relate to this relief. Hegel emphasizes this point by stressing the “in-itself” character of the “relief”: “its action brings it only in itself self-satisfaction or blessed enjoyment,” and “its pitiable action is only in itself the reverse, viz. an absolute action” (156/§230). Having taken on the impersonal will, “its will does indeed

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113 This is why, in reason, consciousness has the “certainty of being all reality.” Consciousness can be certain it is of the same substance as reality and can communicate (rationally) with external actuality because it has taken on the external substance as its own. Throughout reason and spirit (especially ethicality), this is the case. It is not until conscience that consciousness must again take account of the fact that she, as this particular acting subject, must also be the substance of reality.

114 Then, foreshadowing the return of the “unhappy consciousness” in conscience, Hegel writes that “action is only really action when it is the action of an individual” (156/§230).
become universal and essential will, but consciousness itself does not take itself to be this essential will” (156/§230). Further, writes Hegel, “But for itself, action and its own actual doing remain pitiable, its enjoyment remains pain, and the overcoming of these in a positive sense remains a beyond” (156/§230).

What has been overcome in the Unhappy Consciousness’ transition into reason is a relief from unhappiness in itself, which is done through another or through oneself qua rational being. What was in itself and gave it relief from its unhappiness was not identified as the Unhappy Consciousness herself, but was first the mediator, and then herself insofar as she finds herself constrained by rationality. Emptied of her particular content, and taking on the universality of the other, the Unhappy Consciousness can begin to see herself as having the capacity for universality that can be characterized as reason. As Hegel writes, “For the Unhappy Consciousness the in-itself is the beyond of itself” (157/§231). What has not been resolved is for this Unglück to be removed for the Unhappy Consciousness were it to ever act on its own behalf, or to posit anything that was particularly “its own.” If it does act as an individual, this “unhappy” condition will resurface.

The Standpoint of Morality

The tension between the personal and impersonal standpoints resurfaces in Hegel’s discussion of morality. Hegel’s discussion of morality is the third and final section of his sixth chapter, called “Spirit.” His chapter on spirit is his exposition of what he takes to be the most concrete form of appearance (which will be the subject of my final chapter). Morality, which Hegel calls “Spirit that is certain of itself,” is the most developed form of spirit.
Hegel begins his discussion of morality by analyzing the conditions under which there could be moral consciousness. In order for there to be the consciousness of acting for the sake of a moral duty, there must be something that can be brought into line with moral duty. In other words, morality needs something to accomplish: if we were already perfect beings with no choice, there would be no need to discuss morality. According to Hegel’s study of the moral view of the world, what must be brought in line with morality are personal inclinations and the particularities of one’s existence. These personal inclinations contrast with the impersonal nature of duty, and, accordingly, are included in what is immoral. Thus, in order for there to be moral consciousness, there must (the possibility for) immorality as the resource out of which a moral person can be moral.

As a result of the moral duty’s requirement for immorality as the resource for morality, we see that moral consciousness sets itself up in a disharmony with the personal aspects of itself. As Hegel writes, “morality is only moral consciousness as negative essence, for whose pure duty sensuousness has only a negative significance, is only not in conformity with duty” (399/§603). If this harmony were to appear, moral consciousness would vanish since moral consciousness is possible precisely in this disharmony. Consequently, according to Hegel, morality is an “absolute task, one which simply remains a task” (399/§603).

Moral duty concerns itself with what is universally good. But, writes Hegel, “in the actual ‘doing’, however, consciousness behaves as this particular self, as completely individual; it is directed towards reality as such, and has this for its purpose, for it wills to achieve something”
In acting, it realizes that pure duty is not its own, it falls outside of itself. The agent stands alienated from the moral law.

This contradiction within moral consciousness manifests itself in the figure of the beautiful soul and the judging consciousness. The figures of the “Beautiful Soul” and the “judging consciousness” arise after conscience is taken to be the standpoint for moral action. Conscience is the felt necessity for moral action. It is “self-certain” because it feels within itself an imperative to act. Acting on its own, however, is problematic because this will mean acting as a person, a finite individual, and failing to accord with the impersonal and universal imperative that constitutes the position of morality. The Beautiful Soul and the judging consciousness are shapes of consciousness that recognize the transgression of action. The Beautiful Soul does this in order to remain pure and not to transgress the moral imperative by becoming a finite personality. The judging consciousness does this by judging others and pointing out their hypocrisy, while failing to see his own. I will now compare the Beautiful Soul’s development into the judging consciousness to the stoic’s development into Skepticism. This comparison aims to show that the conscientious consciousness inherits a contradiction much like the Unhappy Consciousness.

\[\text{[401-402/§607]}\]

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Lauer writes that “‘pure duty,’ then, resides not so much in the consciousness of the individual as in that of the ‘holy legislator’” (244). See *A Reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology*. We can also note here the realization that comes from the Real Individual, that it must concern itself with the objective actuality of its self-expression.

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More specifically, this is Kant’s “categorical imperative,” which is an impersonal, universal imperative which states that I ought never to act unless I can will that my will become the universal law for every “one.”
Hegel’s figure of the Beautiful Soul feels a kind of certainty similar to that of the Real Individual as we studied it in Chapter Two. The Real Individual held onto its implicit understanding of itself in the face of its experience of itself in the world. The Beautiful Soul is a moral attitude which holds onto its implicit “moral goodness.” This is an attitude that feels the imperative of the moral law, but also implicitly, at least, recognizes that concrete action requires one to act as a person and will contradict the impersonal moral law. In response to this, the Beautiful Soul represents the kind of person who refrains from acting, and, since she does not act, she knows she has done nothing wrong. However, since she does not act, she mistakenly takes her condition of not-having-done-anything-wrong to be equivalent to being a good person.

Stoicism, as well as the Beautiful Soul, arises in an attempt to control the contingency of the external, sensuous world. It posits what counts as essential as wholly within its grasp. However, Hegel argues that the attempts these shapes make to obstinately hold on to one side of existence will show itself to be contradictory.

Hegel discusses the happiness of the Stoic in his Lectures on the History of Philosophy. A central question according to Hegel’s analysis of Stoicism is the connection between happiness (Glückseligkeit) and virtue. He writes, “Happiness in general means nothing more than the feeling of harmony with self.” He continues, “For this happiness would be just the enjoyment of the individual as the harmony of existence with him as individual; but with him as

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117 Pinkard’s description of one of the tactics of the Beautiful Soul are very similar to stoicism: “the ‘beautiful soul’ can withdraw into himself and focus exclusively on his own subjectivity, withdrawing from the world and trying to find what is truly his own by attending exclusively to the purely personal and most subjective elements of his life” (214). Pinkard, however, ends up identifying the Beautiful Soul with something explicitly personal, whereas I draw out how it retreats into the impersonal purity that it finds in its failure to act. See Pinkard, Hegel’s Phenomenology.

individual true happiness does not harmonize, but only with him as universal man.”

Consequently, “That freedom which the Stoics ascribe to man is not without relation to what is other than him; thus he is really dependent, and under this category happiness really falls. My independence is only one side, to which the other side, the particular side of my existence, hence does not yet correspond.”119 This stoic happiness thus requires a correspondence between two terms; yet, for Hegel’s interpretation of stoicism, the stoic has asserted that this happiness could only come at the expense of one of the terms.

Similarly, the Beautiful Soul is shown to posit a one-sided purity or stability that is similar to the stoic view of happiness. The Beautiful Soul shows the appearance of beauty as a unity of form and content. It appears to itself to have this unity because it has no content that conflicts with it. In the stoic position, a conflict arises between its universal and particular nature, and this makes its conception of “happiness,” or perfect correspondence with itself, impossible. The Beautiful Soul appears to have this correspondence or unity because it ignores the side of itself that contradicts this unity.120 Like the stoic, the Beautiful Soul only has the empty universal thought of goodness. It posits itself as good since it claims to occupy only the impersonal aspect of the correspondence between personal action and impersonal, pure virtue. The problem with this standpoint of goodness is that, of the two terms in the correspondence, one of them, namely the personal and particular, does not appear.121 The Beautiful Soul has no substance that can relate to the good. Hegel concludes: “In this transparent purity of its moments, an unhappy, so-

120 Hegel writes that the Beautiful Soul “lives in dread of besmirching the splendor of its inner being by action and an existence; and, in order to preserve the purity of its heart, it flees from contact with the actual world” (432-433/§658). Later, he writes that “Its particularity consists in the fact that the two moments constituting its consciousness, the self and the in-itself, are held to be unequal in value within it” (434/§660).
121 Hegel writes, for example, “All life, all spiritual essentiality, has withdrawn into this self and has lost its difference from the J itself” and “Just as little has consciousness an outer existence, for the objective aspect does not get as far as being a negative of the actual self, in the same way that this self does not attain to an actual existence” (432/§658).
called ‘beautiful soul’, its light dies away within it, and it vanishes like a shapeless vapor that
dissolves into thin air” (433/§658, my emphasis). This conception of happiness was untenable
because the Beautiful Soul maintained a negative stance towards any personal content that would
fulfill it.

Hegel’s use of “unhappy” to describe the Beautiful Soul is consistent with his use of this
term in the Unhappy Consciousness and his discussion of happiness as harmony with respect to
Stoicism. Unhappiness means a kind of disunity with oneself, and because the Beautiful Soul has
no unity between itself as impersonal and itself as personal, it too is described as “unhappy.”
While the context in which these two shapes of consciousness arise in Hegel’s text are different,
they both follow a similar logic insofar as both retreat from the world because each recognizes
that to engage in the world is to lose control of oneself. The stoic loses a sense of “freedom” and
the Beautiful Soul loses its ability to determine itself, by itself, as morally good. What we see,
then, is that with respect to navigating the personal and impersonal aspects of one’s experience
of oneself, the logic of the standpoints of stoicism and the Beautiful Soul are the same.

*The Skeptic and the Judging Consciousness*

In his description of Stoicism, Hegel writes that “just as Stoicism corresponds to the
Notion of the independent consciousness which appeared as the lord and bondsman relationship,
so Skepticism corresponds to its realization as a negative attitude towards otherness” (140/§202).
Unlike the stoic attitude, which withdraws its concern for externality, the skeptic attitude actively
(and negatively) engages with the world. Again, contrasting the stoic and skeptic standpoints,
Hegel describes the skeptic as a “moment of self-consciousness, to which it does not happen that
its truth and reality vanish without its knowing how, but which, in the certainty of its freedom, makes this ‘other’ which claims to be real, vanish” (141/§204). Consequently, one difference we can notice between Stoicism and Skepticism is that the standpoint of skepticism does relate, though negatively, to the world.

Although the skeptic is able to engage with the world in terms of its stance of negativity, it could not furnish itself with any content with which to act. Hegel describes the speech of the skeptic as “like the squabbling of stubborn children, one of whom says A if the other says B, and in turn says B if the other says A” (143/§205).\(^{122}\) This game of contradiction could not take place between two pure skeptics because until one of them asserts a position, there is nothing to negate. A positive assertion must be made and this content cannot be provided for by the pure exercise of negativity. Although Stoicism was devoid of content because it cannot leave pure thinking, Skepticism is without any content but the negative of what is provided to it. The ability for the skeptic to relate to the world is reactive and thus fully dependent on the external world for its ability to engage as a skeptic. Thus whenever the skeptic acts or does anything on its own, it contradicts itself. Since its standpoint as a “skeptic” does not allow it to introduce a positive assertion, whenever it leaves this philosophical attitude and goes about its life, it ceases to maintain its self-conception.

Hegel’s analysis of a standpoint he calls the “judging consciousness” follows his analysis of the Beautiful Soul. The shape of consciousness that Hegel is analyzing here only exists in dialogue with another being, much like the analysis of lordship and bondage discussed in

\(^{122}\) Regarding this point, Lauer writes, “As a result its life is not even one of genuine self-consciousness; it negates one object after another, singly, but that serves no positive purpose. It rises above the contingency of the confusing existent world which surrounds it and at the same time flounders in the very inessentiality it has created” (139). See *A Reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology*. 
Chapter One. The relationship is between someone who acts and someone who observes this action from the standpoint of morality. From the standpoint of pure morality, action is hypocrisy because a moral actor must, in order to accord its actions with the impersonal universal standpoint, claim to be acting only as a universal agent; however, its action will always only be done as a particular person.

The judging consciousness takes a similar stance towards the particular actions of the conscientious actor as the skeptic makes towards the content of its world. Like the skeptic, the judging consciousness is not able to supply itself with any content or personality. Without any ability to have a substantial being in the world via action, the judge meets a similar fate as the Beautiful Soul. The conscientious actor is met with skepticism by the judging consciousness. The judging consciousness, like the skeptic, judges from the empty position of seeming moral purity. Hypocrisy is seen in the individual who acts because she claims that her actions are good (and thus universal), while she nevertheless acts as a particular individual. The judge wants the action to be impersonal, but this is impossible because action can only ever be the action of a specific person (155-156/§230). Further, although the judge would like to claim his position is one of impersonal neutrality, the inactive stance of the judge is not morally neutral. When the “hard heart” of the judge finally breaks, it is because he is made to recognize that this stance has nothing to stand on. The hard heart breaks because he has no substance, no person(ality). Both the Beautiful Soul and the hard heart of the judging consciousness are described by Hegel as prey to a “yearning” which wastes away. Similarly, what the judge finds is that there is no neutral stance in morality. Judging and what may seem to be “inaction” are actions as well. To

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123 See also Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure*, 495 on this connection.
124 As Hegel writes, “but since it fills the empty duty with a specific content from itself, it is positively aware that it, as this particular self, makes the content” (433/§659).
quote Hegel: “Judging, however, is also to be looked at as a positive act of thought and has a positive content” (436/§665).

Like the skeptic, the judge finds himself unable to be the pure, impersonal moral being he sets out to be. He cannot escape his necessarily personal nature. For the skeptic, this recognition led it to the Unhappy Consciousness. For the judging consciousness, however, its logical development is found in its confession of conscience.¹²⁵

*Unhappy Consciousness and Conscience as Confession*

Like the Unhappy Consciousness, conscience experiences itself as inescapably engaged with reality in a personal way. Hegel’s analysis of the Unhappy Consciousness arises out of his analysis of skepticism as involved in the project of self-negating self-consciousness. The analysis of the Unhappy Consciousness is found to be “unhappy,” unable to reconcile itself with what it posited as essential, because it found itself to be necessarily contingent and personal. Hegel’s analysis of conscience shows a similar standpoint. Hegel contrasts conscience with his description of moral self-consciousness because, for Hegel, the standpoint of morality “obtains no filling and no positive content, no world” (416/§633). Conscience, on the other hand, has “a content for the previously empty duty, as also for the right and the universal will that were empty of content. And because this self-assurance is at the same time an *immediacy, conscience exists*” (416/§633). In his analysis of the Unhappy Consciousness and the moral standpoint, Hegel distinguishes between the abstract universal and the concrete particular. This distinction can be

¹²⁵ This refers to confession that is made to be a confession, not an economic exchange, but a pure throwing away of oneself. Like the slave, the confession is not able to be truly a confession until the hard heart refuses it. This point is made by J.M. Bernstein in “Confession and Forgiveness: Hegel’s Poetics of Action.”
made clearer if we consider Hegel’s remark that conscience exists immediately and concretely, not as an empty container for its different duties, which Hegel calls a “positive universal medium,” but rather as a “negative one” [negative Eins] (418/§635). Here, he refers us back to an earlier point in the text.

Hegel talks about concrete immediacy through the difference between the passive medium and the negative unity in his discussion of perception. The “thing” of perception could be identified as a collection of properties that are indifferent to one another. In this conception of the thing, the properties are related by an “indifferent also” (81/§113). This passive medium is where all of the determinacies interpenetrate, “but without coming into contact with one another, for it is precisely through participating in this universality that they exist indifferently on their own account” (80/§113). But, says Hegel, if the properties are indifferent to one another, the thing cannot be determinate: “for they are only determinate in so far as they differentiate themselves from one another, and relate themselves to others as to their opposites” (81/§114). Determinate relation involves negation. Each property cannot equally assert itself positively. A thing must differentiate itself in order to stand out from other things and have an identity. Thus, it cannot have a concrete identity as a thing if it exists as a passive “also”; instead, it must assert itself as a unity, as a one, and this must be done negatively. Since the experience of conscientious action is one of concrete immediacy where I feel that I must act in these particular circumstances, I experience myself, this single individual, as the author and substance of my actions. I must assert myself in this way in this situation. In asserting myself, I must maintain myself as a negative one or negative unity. I cannot be anyone, I must be this one in order to act. Thus, similar to the way the thing of perception must appear as a (negative) one, the conscientious consciousness’s action must appear as a one.
Hegel’s contrast between the “positive universal medium” and the “negative one” helps to emphasize the immediate concrete certainty of conscientious action. When acting conscientiously, one does not weigh the different duties one has to one’s family, friends, state, etc. To think of oneself as a receptacle for different duties which could be measured and weighed indifferently and impersonally would be to think of oneself as a “positive universal medium” instead of a “negative unity.” Instead, conscience is the immediate decisiveness of action. It does not first turn to its duties, and secondarily turn to its own concrete situation; instead, the duties are evaluated on the basis of the concrete moral certainty that it experiences.

When we act from out of an experience of conscience, while we may have a number of conflicting duties that we must follow, we have the certainty of knowing what is right without first consulting these duties. We assert and tie ourselves to some way of acting at the expense of all other possibilities. The concept of a “negative unity” shows the basic structure of what conscientious action is and, as we will see, why confession happens in the first place. If conscience behaved as a “passive medium,” Hegel says that either no action could take place, because there will always be some conflict of duties to prevent what would be immoral action, or “if action did take place, there would be an actual violation of one of the conflicting duties” (418/§635). The stance of a “passive medium” would allow one to indifferently and neutrally relate to the duties in one’s life. Engaging as a negative unity, consciousness cannot maintain the neutral stance needed for moral purity. Instead, conscience takes a non-neutral stand, which, from the standpoints of morality seen in the Beautiful Soul and the Judging Consciousness, this non-neutral stance is necessarily guilty or transgressive of the moral law.

\[126\] Instead of a “thing” as a collection of properties, moral action is more like the immediate apprehension captured in Hegel’s analysis of sense-certainty. Also, this certainty gets rid of the idea that “places so-called pure morality outside of itself into another, holy being and takes itself to be unholy” (418/§636).
In the experience of conscience, one sees oneself as necessarily a negative unity. In the concrete immediacy, one is compelled to engage in a particular action, in particular circumstances, as this individual. Making oneself appear as a “one” involves the negative side of negative unity. In appearing “this way” or engaging in “this action,” one is compelled to recognize certain things as in line with what is right, and all other actions as failing to live up to the duty of conscience. In this way, one takes a negative stance towards everything except for one’s own projects. In action, one takes one’s own condition as exceptional.

This standpoint of exception is experienced in a contradictory way by Hegel’s conscientious actor. On the one hand, the concrete immediacy of the experience compels the actor to see herself as outside of any given impersonal rule, since, as concrete, her experience is personal and tied up with the particularities of her circumstances. On the other hand, faced with the impersonal purity of the moral law embodied by the Judging Consciousness, she recognizes herself as, at the same time, falling outside of the moral law, an exception, and therefore evil. Thus, from “within” herself as an actor she experiences her exceptional condition as necessarily good, and from “without,” through her ability to see herself judged by the impersonal, universal moral law embodied by the judging consciousness, her exceptional condition is seen as necessarily evil. This can be represented as an other outside of me, or another side of myself. What opposes the conscientious actor is, in Hegel’s text, found in another being, in the Judging Consciousness because it is the judging consciousness that concretely realizes the “impersonal”\(^{127}\) opposition to the conscientious actor. While I may take myself to be beholden to the rational, impersonal moral law, I experience myself as a personal actor. In order to feel “happy” or at one with myself, I must reconcile myself with this judge that judges me as evil.

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\(^{127}\) What we will see in the following paragraphs is that conscience can actualize itself as confession because the Judging Consciousness is not impersonal.
from the impersonal standpoint. This leads conscience to look more closely at the standpoint of the judge.

Taking the judge’s standpoint as its object, conscience finds in the judge the same thing that Hegel finds in his analysis of Skepticism that leads him to the figure of the Unhappy Consciousness. The skeptic attempted to be the pure, impersonal negative standpoint, but found that it was necessarily personal and impure. Likewise, conscience sees that the judge, while it attempts to remain pure, necessarily acts as particular person insofar as it takes on the acting of judging. Further, since the judge only judges and does not do anything, its inaction cannot be seen as actually doing good deeds. So, conscience sees in the judge the same kind of “exceptional” state it sees in itself. It is the recognition of this identity between the two positions that brings about confession. The acting consciousness sees in the judge’s stance of moral purity that it too has failed to be the pure impersonal. It too is a personal stance. Thus, writes Hegel, “perceiving this identity and giving expression to it, he confesses” (438/§666). The act of confession is the recognition of a certain unity, but of a unity of necessary difference, each recognizing each other as, in necessary moments, a negative unity. Instead of taking itself to be the only exception, conscience comes to recognize each person as, in a sense, an exception. Here we can recall the intersubjective origin of self-consciousness. Hegel argued that self-consciousness arises in oneself only after recognizing the self-consciousness of another. Here, confession works in the same way. Like the bondsman who does not first say “I am self-consciousness,” but instead “I, too, am self-consciousness,” the conscientious actor says in its experience of the judging consciousness, “I, too, must confess.”

Although it must act as the substance of its action, confession is the acknowledgement that its action can only ever be finite and personal. It cannot speak on its own for the impersonal,
though, just as much, if the impersonal is to speak, someone must do it. Thus conscience acknowledges it cannot represent the moral purity of universality.

A basic issue motivating Stoicism was to gain control over what was its own and to disassociate itself with what was not within its control. This was its intended path to freedom. The Unhappy Consciousness showed the experience of the impossibility of gaining ultimate control over itself. The Beautiful Soul held onto its pure impersonal nature because it understood it could not control what was outside of itself. It refused to give up control of itself and allow itself to be determined by the concrete interpersonal world. In confession, however, consciousness does let itself go and engages with the interpersonal world. In letting itself go by truly confessing to its equally impure other, confession acknowledges that it cannot be in accord with the impersonal ideal to which it feels itself responsible. Although the “beyond” (the judge of the moral law embodied in another) is now in communication with the confessor, it is still outside of his own possession. The confessor still does not have control over the security of the ground of his actions and this is why he is confessing. Therefore, while the dialogue of confession and forgiveness may be one of reconciliation, it is the movement of reconciling, and not an end state of united, reconciled beings. The confessor is confessing that, although he cannot be the ultimate ground for his actions, there is no more fundamental ground that could. Thus, in confessing, he confesses to the necessity of living out his experience as an “unhappy” consciousness.

Jean Wahl suggests a similar conclusion regarding the inescapability of the Unhappy Consciousness. Regarding absolute negativity as the “movement of spirit,” he writes that it “first becomes fully conscious of itself in the unhappy consciousness, but is also the driving force of the whole Phenomenology. Further, regarding this negativity as the basic “road” of the Phenomenology, he writes, “this road does not stop” (286). See “Extract from The Unhappy Consciousness in the Philosophy of Hegel.”
I take this analysis to challenge the idea that Hegel’s philosophy is properly characterized as a metaphysics of presence. Alexandre Kojève, in his influential lectures on Hegel, prioritized lordship and bondage as the primary moment in the *Phenomenology*. Perhaps this is one reason while, despite the desire for a philosophy which has the Unhappy Consciousness as a primary moment, many French thinkers following Hegel did not see that this is in fact the philosophy he is presenting. Sartre, taking himself to be opposing Hegel, writes that “The being of human reality is suffering because it rises in being as perpetually haunted by a totality which it is without being able to be it, precisely because it could not attain the in-itself without losing itself as for-itself. Human reality therefore is by nature an unhappy consciousness with no possibility of surpassing its unhappy state.”¹²⁹ I take this description to be an adequate description of what Hegel is in fact up to in the logic of morality that ends his discussion of spirit. Thus, far from being a “closure” or closed self-identity, Hegel ultimately finds a rift within experience that persists throughout his phenomenology of spirit.

*Part Two: Conscience and the Oracular Affirmation of Contingency in Action*

*Introduction*

In Part One of this chapter, I have argued that the Unhappy Consciousness is a shape of consciousness that ultimately persists within confession, which, when paired with forgiveness is

¹²⁹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 140. Despite a good deal of opposition to this point from different writers, there is some agreement from within Hegel scholarship. For example, McGowan writes, “Through his conception of absolute knowledge, Hegel paradoxically affirms the insurmountability of the absence that haunts being. No matter how much we know, the theory of the absolute has it, we will always encounter a limit to our knowledge that results from being’s lack of identity with itself.”
the most developed and fundamental shape of spirit. By comparing the Unhappy Consciousness and confession, I showed a rift that persists within consciousness between an impersonal ideal and the concrete personal reality that we find ourselves in.

In Part Two, I will examine how Hegel characterizes the way that confession relates to itself as one necessary side of this rift. Specifically, I will look at how conscience relates to the contingency involved in moral action. In order to characterize Hegel’s argument for the most concrete way in which we relate to the personal side of our existence, I will show three ways that Hegel characterizes the relationship between the necessity of the moral law and the contingency of moral action. I will focus on three moments Hegel has emphasized in the history of moral action. I will look at how the individual relates to her own contingency in terms of Hegel’s reading of the oracle, Socrates’ daemon, and conscience.

Two things seem to characterize moral considerations that can result in an indifferent attitude towards the contingency of action. First, morality is generally concerned with what one can do or control. We generally do not hold people morally accountable for things they could not have foreseen or controlled. As a result, these things are often seen to fall outside of moral concerns. Second, actions are said to be moral insofar as they appeal to a law higher than one’s own idiosyncratic needs. In other words, what makes an action right for me is the same thing that makes it right for everyone (thus, it is impersonal). If I hold different standards for myself than I do for others, one might say I have begun to tread an immoral path. Both of these characteristics of morality lead one to focus on the universal truths of morality.

Hegel’s discussion includes these two moral considerations, but, as we will see in his discussion of conscience, his view of conscientious moral action is broader in scope and considers contingent and personal motives to be necessary as parts of moral action. Moral action,
as Hegel will argue, is ultimately about making changes in the actual world. The actual world is filled with contingencies that are beyond one’s control. Orienting oneself to the actual world means orienting oneself to all of the contingencies of life. The study of the contingencies of action takes account of how people orient themselves towards the ultimate contingency of reality. With respect to these contingencies, we can either take them to be indifferent or to be essential to the moral value of the action. We relate to the contingent with a stance of indifference when we take the external world to have no say in the morality of an action. We take the contingencies to be essential when we take them to be essential to the moral action and, consequently, take these aspects of the action to determine the value of the action. For the rest of the chapter, I will analyze ways in which we take these two stances towards the contingencies involved in moral action.

I will begin by discussing the figure of the oracle, showing how relating to the oracle takes the responsibility for a concern with the contingent states of affairs to be beyond one’s own agency. Next I will discuss the figure of Socrates’ daimon, which Hegel interprets as presenting a shape of morality where the decisive power is moved inwards. Nonetheless, even though the task of interpretation and the power of decision-making is, in a sense, taken on by the individual, this power is not seen as his own power and so the relation to a daimon maintains a stance of indifference to the ultimate context for the decision. Finally, I will discuss conscience, which continues to articulate these themes by drawing on Hegel’s account of conscience. Here, Hegel shows a shape of morality where one takes sole responsibility for the power of decision-making as well as the contingency upon which this is based. While Hegel’s view of conscience no longer holds a stance of indifference towards contingency, we will see that it still retains a sense of the oracular nature of moral action. Thus, though we will initially want to disregard the stance of
morality that takes oracles to be decisive for it, Hegel will find that action is ultimately, in a sense, oracular in nature.

*The Oracle*

In the third and final section of “Spirit certain of itself: morality” Hegel begins with a section called “The Moral Worldview.” The moral worldview takes Kant’s moral philosophy as its standard. Kant takes care to distinguish morality from the empirical world. For example, in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant states that “Empirical principles are wholly incapable of serving as a foundation for moral laws.”

Moral concepts, writes Kant, “cannot be obtained by abstraction from any empirical, and therefore merely contingent, cognitions.” Morality relies on rational beings autonomously formulating the moral law. This allows rational beings to attain a degree of certainty and universality that would be impossible if they attempted to derive the moral law from their own contingent circumstances. Further, according to Kant, not only are empirical considerations indifferent to understanding the moral law, they also prevent us from recognizing the moral law. He writes, “Thus every empirical element is not only quite incapable of being an aid to the principle of morality, but is even highly prejudicial to the purity of morals.” While I will not focus on Kant explicitly, the remainder of this chapter traces over Hegel’s critique of Kant’s moral view. While it is important to know

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130 Kant, *Groundwork*, 99.
131 Kant, *Groundwork*, 72.
132 Kant, *Groundwork*, 85
133 There are many sources for further study of Hegel’s critique of Kant. See, among others, Sally Sedgwick, “Hegel on the Empty Formalism of Kant’s Categorical Imperative”; Kenneth Westphal’s “Hegel’s Critique of Kant’s Moral View”; Allen Wood, *Kant’s Ethical Thought and Hegel’s Ethical Thought*, Kimberly Hutchins, “Hegel, ethics and the logic of universality.”
the Kantian origin of these ideas, I will focus on the ideas themselves, specifically with how to relate properly to the empirical, contingent world in moral considerations.

Initially, we may take a stance of indifference towards contingency. However, since actually acting takes place in the empirical world, we must figure out how to properly relate to this realm when we are concerned with action. Since empirical influences lie outside of the concern of the moral view, the moral agent must keep them outside of the decision-making process. Thus, in order to accurately follow the moral law, we will take a stance of indifference towards contingency.

We will begin by looking at one of Hegel’s discussions of the Greek world in order to see one way that we may take a stance of indifference toward the empirical and contingent world. In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel discusses how the Greeks would ultimately make their important moral and political decisions. He writes,

> We know that the Greeks undoubtedly had laws on which to form their judgments, but on the other hand, both in private and public life, immediate decisions had to be made. But in them the Greeks, with all their freedom, did not decide from the subjective will. The general or the people did not take it upon themselves to decide as to what was best in the State, nor did the individual do so in the family. For in making these decisions, the Greeks took refuge in oracles, sacrificial animals, soothsayers, or, like the Romans, asked counsel of birds in flight. 134

Hegel here draws out the distinction between a law and the immediate need to make decisions in a way that will parallel his contrast between the moral law and the felt need to act characteristic of conscience. I will discuss this in the last section of this chapter and what we will see is that Hegel finds the moral law to be deficient when it comes to making immediate decisions. For now, what I want to draw attention to is the way that Hegel is highlighting this standpoint he finds in the Ancient Greek world. When decisions need to be made, any humanly constructed

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law was recognized to be deficient. Instead, they turned outwards because they recognized that concerns about existing world and the concrete outcomes of their actions were outside of their control and were put outside of their individual decision-making process.

The Greeks may often have turned to oracles or other divine signs out of a concern for the future because they recognized that they could not have ultimate control or insight into the future. They recognized their inability to predict, to know what to do on the basis of the human cognitive faculties alone. For example, oracles were consulted about whether or not to engage in a certain battle. It was recognized that the ultimate outcome is beyond the control of the Greeks and so they would have to turn to that which is beyond them for a help. Hegel refers to Xenophon, for example, who says that we humans can know particular skills, and can marry or build a house, but we cannot know how these things will turn out – if we will be happy, or who will inhabit the house. Since knowledge of the ultimate results is beyond a human being’s capacity to know, this kind of knowledge is seen as divine knowledge. Because this knowledge was seen as beyond human capacity, many would turn to the gods. Since the ultimate result of action is not within the hands of the individual actor, but is, in the understanding of the Greeks at least, in the hands of the gods, the individual cannot have ultimate control over her actions and therefore cannot take ultimate responsibility for them. Hegel discusses this ancient relationship to contingency in a similar fashion in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in his discussion of religion in the form of art, Hegel discusses the relationship between the individual and the ultimate contingency of her life: “For the contingent is something that is not self-possessed and is alien, and therefore the ethical consciousness lets itself settle such matters too, as by a throw of the dice, in an unthinking and

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alien manner” (466/§712). Since all of the contingent aspects of action are not seen to be properly mine, people living out of this conception of reality will treat the contingencies as independent from themselves. In this case, one takes a stance of indifference towards the contingent. Of course, by comparing the oracle to a throw of the dice, Hegel is not saying that those who went to the Oracle treated it as contingent. They took themselves to be consulting the absolute authority of the gods. However, they recognized that it was not within their ability to decide these things, and so they did not conclude their actions by thinking, but in the “unthought” consultations of oracles. One can imagine making a difficult decision, and concluding that one cannot find within oneself the ability to gain any certainty regarding it. In such cases, a person might give up thinking for themselves about their decisions, and ask someone whom they take to have access to the truth for their answers, perhaps someone in the community who is acknowledged as having expertise in “divining” the future. Now, it seems that what Hegel is highlighting with the “throw of the dice” is not whether or not the individual takes the other to have access to the truth, but with how the individual relates to the contingent content of her action. Hegel writes, “For what is contingent is the impulsive, the alien, and ethical consciousness thus also lets itself, for example, with a roll of the dice, determine itself in an impulsive and alien manner about these things” (466/§712). What Hegel focuses on here is the fact that when consulting an oracle, one lets the contingent remain arbitrary and relates to it in a haphazard fashion. This means that, while one wants to make the best decision possible, one is relying on something one does not understand.

In a similar way, Stoicism, according to Hegel, also takes up the problem of contingency by maintaining a stance of indifference to what is contingent. Hegel discussion of Stoicism highlights how the stoics claim that what is good is what is within one’s control. For the Stoic,
those things which are not within one’s control are not to be taken as truly important. Consequently, the stoic retreats into pure thought because it is only here that we seem to be fully in possession of ourselves. However, the position of pure thought is deficient according to Hegel because the universality of thinking is unable to communicate with the particularity of the concrete world. Hegel finds similar problems with what he sees in the concept of morality insofar as morality requires acting, not as this particular self, but as a representative of the moral law. While it is true that moral action must accord with the universal law, action must take place in particular circumstances and must be taken up by an individual. As Hegel understands it, the problem is that the universality of the moral law must be articulated into the concrete immediacy of life’s decisions. For Hegel, the moral law is without any concrete prescription. It is “empty” and unable to do this, and so we can only relate to actual actions and their accompanying contingencies indifferently.\(^\text{136}\) By itself, the universal law is deficient if it takes the particularity of the circumstances to be an indifferent concern because it is only by going through the particularities of the circumstances that our actions can take place in the actual world. Again, for the stoic, writes Hegel, this “freedom of self-consciousness is indifferent to natural existence and has therefore let this equally go free” (140/§200). Letting the contingency of natural existence “go free” means that I disassociate myself from it. According to Hegel’s account of the stoic, pure thought fails to make contact with “the fullness of life” (140/§200).\(^\text{137}\) This is similar to the way the Greeks confronted contingency as something free from and alien to them. They allowed something they did not understand to decide on the concrete content of their important moral and

\(^{136}\) See 413/§630, 416/§633, 417/§634. Harris writes, regarding Hegel’s similar discussion in the section on law-giving reason, that the problem is the moral law “unites a universal form, with a contingent content” (Harris, Vol. II, 114).

\(^{137}\) It remains within the empty formalism of its claim that “The true and the Good shall consist in reasonableness” (§200).
political actions. The stoic, similarly, has “no content in its own self but one that is given to it” (140/§200). We will see this stance of indifference to the concrete conditions of life throughout the discussion of the oracle and the daimon. It is not until Hegel’s discussion of conscience that will we see a different attitude towards the concrete determinations of life.

Many concrete decisions that we need to make rely on the natural world. In the Lectures on the Philosophy of History, Hegel discusses the different ways that people confronted the absolute through nature. In this discussion we can see a difference between the Greek relationship to the oracle and their relationship to the god Pan. For Hegel, Pan represents not just an alien totality that has no relation to humans, but something “friendly to the human spirit.”¹³⁸ Nature or Pan is represented, not as the objective whole, “but that indefinite neutral ground which involves the element of the subjective; he embodies that thrill which pervades us in the silence of the forests.”¹³⁹ This god was not an object in the world, but the fabric of the world as such. It seems, accordingly, he could not be feared, but provoked anxiety.¹⁴⁰ Thus, this anxiety, as a relation to Pan, did not tell one what to fear, avoid, or pursue, but was indeterminate, and this general anxiety would have to be interpreted by an individual. So, while here one can find some connection with nature, this connection does not present itself clearly, but must be divined from nature. In this Greek relationship to Pan we can see a difference between an alien external reality and an external world that is in communication with us. This is because in the relation with contingency where one consults an oracle, one takes the divine interpreter to have access to the truth behind the contingent appearances, whereas in the relation to Pan, one takes oneself to

¹³⁸ Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of History, 234.
¹³⁹ Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of History, 235.
¹⁴⁰ Hegel remarks, “a ‘panic terror’ is the common expression for a groundless fright” (LPH 235). Here I also follow Heidegger’s distinction between fear and anxiety. In Being and Time, Heidegger distinguishes between fear and anxiety insofar as fear has an object and anxiety does not.
relate to the general ground of the external world, though it does present a clear interpretation of how one should relate to the external world. Heraclitus says, “The lord whose oracle is in Delphi neither indicates clearly nor conceals but gives a sign.”\textsuperscript{141} In this way, both the oracle and relating to Pan is “oracular” in a sense that it is a divine externality that requires human interpretation.\textsuperscript{142} Thus, both oracles and our relation to nature as Pan require an interpreter.

Making contact with the divine externality found in nature required the human faculty. This necessary interpretation is described by Hegel in the \textit{Lectures on the History of Philosophy}. He writes, “we have, on the one hand, the Indefinite, which, however, holds communication with man; on the other hand the fact, that such communication is only a subjective imagining—an explanation furnished by the percipient himself.”\textsuperscript{143} The process of communication with the beyond as understood by the Greeks was not a simple transmission of the message; rather, the songs of the muses, for example, were “the productions of thoughtfully listening spirit—\textit{creative} while \textit{observant}.”\textsuperscript{144} This act of interpretation was called \textit{manteia}. This \textit{manteia} requires an interpreter, a \textit{mantis}, to make sense of the delirium that was caused by nature. The gods, through nature, were consulted,

But the sounds of the bowls dashing against each other were quite indefinite, and had no objective sense; the sense—the signification—was imparted to the sounds only by the human beings who heard them. Thus also the Delphic priestesses, in a senseless, distracted state—in the intoxication of enthusiasm (mania)—uttered unintelligible sounds; and it was the \textit{mantis} who gave to these utterances definite meaning.\textsuperscript{145}

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\textsuperscript{141} Heraclitus, \textit{Fragments}, 93.
\textsuperscript{142} In the context of Hegel’s reference to Socrates’ daimon in the \textit{Phenomenology}, Harris argues that that the oracle, Pan and the daimon are all considered “oracular” for Hegel: “It is clear that Hegel wants to regard all prophetic revelations as ‘oracular’. Harris, \textit{Hegel’s Ladder Vol. II}, 593.
\textsuperscript{143} Hegel, \textit{Lectures on the Philosophy of History}, 235.
\textsuperscript{144} Hegel, \textit{Lectures on the Philosophy of History}, 235.
\textsuperscript{145} Hegel, \textit{Lectures on the Philosophy of History}, 236.
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What makes sense out of the divine is, as Hegel’s analysis of the Greeks shows, ultimately in the hands of a human interpreter.\footnote{This follows a similar logic as that of the role of the divine mediator discussed in Chapter Two on the Unhappy Consciousness.} This is important because what Hegel is showing is that, although the Greeks wanted to maintain a stance of indifference to the contingent world and make decisions without the use of their cognitive capacities, this is ultimately what is happening when consulting their gods.

The signs from external nature, which connect one to the empirical world that is essential to action, require human intelligence to interpret. The noise of the earth must be put into intelligible sounds, into language, and this can only be done by a skilled interpreter who can change the \textit{sensuous} into the \textit{sensible}—the Intellectual.\footnote{Hegel, \textit{Lectures on the Philosophy of History}, 237.} Hegel describes this ability to interpret divine signs as a \textit{meaningfully knowing perception}.\footnote{Hegel, \textit{Lectures on the Philosophy of History}, 237.} Thus, despite the fact that one may want to \textit{outsource} one’s decision-making to nature as an external oracle, the external world does need to be interpreted before decisions can be meaningfully made. We can see that those consulting oracles, in the end, had to decipher its signs with their own interpretive power. Nevertheless, despite the fact that we can see that the external, contingent world required a human interpreter to give sense to things, in this conception of moral action Hegel writes, \textit{“men derive their resolves (Entschlüsse) not yet from themselves, but from their Oracles.”}\footnote{Hegel, \textit{Lectures on the Philosophy of History}, 250.} Thus, when one is indifferent to the contingent, empirical world, one does not ultimately derive one’s resolve from oneself.
Socrates’ Daimon

We will now look at Hegel’s reading of the daimon of Socrates in order to see another way that Hegel discusses the moral consideration of the contingency involved in action. The difference between relating to an oracle and relating to a daimon shares much in common with the transition from Catholicism to Protestantism that Hegel discusses in his Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion and is discussed conceptually in the Phenomenology of Spirit’s description of the Unhappy Consciousness.¹⁵⁰ Hegel says that between Catholicism and Protestantism, there is a move from the external authority of the church and icons to the inner authority of the Holy Spirit within the individual. In the Unhappy Consciousness, this is represented in the move from the mediator to reason in the second and third stages of Unhappy Consciousness. As we saw earlier, consciousness “casts upon the mediator or minister its own freedom of decision, and herewith the responsibility for its own action” (154/§228). As an “Unhappy Consciousness” I “outsource” my decision-making to another and therewith I divest myself of my own responsibility. Here, what is essential to the decision-making is found in another. When consciousness moves from being an Unhappy Consciousness to the standpoint of “reason,” however, what is (“Sein”) is taken to be what is one’s own (“Seinen”) (164/§240). Socrates, moving from the external oracle to the inner daimon, follows a similar movement.

The major difference between the oracle and the daimon of Socrates is the fact that whereas the oracle was outside of and separate from the individual, the daimon is found within

the individual. Hegel says that the figure of the daimon “implies that now man decides in accordance with his perception and by himself.”\textsuperscript{151} Hegel writes of the Greeks that

they took it [the individuality of judgment] to be a contingency of the individual, and hence, as contingency of circumstances is an external, they also made the contingency of judgment into something external, i.e. they consulted their oracles — conscious that the individual will is itself a contingent. But Socrates, who placed the contingency of judgment in himself, since he had his daemon in his own consciousness, thereby abolished the external universal dæmon from which the Greeks obtained their judgments.\textsuperscript{152}

The “resolve” which in the relation to the oracle had been placed outside of the individual, is now found within.

We can see this in Socrates’ discussion of his “daimon” in the \textit{Phaedrus}. In the “Phaedrus,” Socrates, excited by Phaedrus’s reading of Lysias’s speech, gave his own speech which argued that Eros was to be avoided in certain sexual relationships. He later considered this to be a bad speech about Eros, one which would offend the gods since he has argued the god Eros is to be avoided. As he leaves the spot where he and Phaedrus were speaking, he says that “just as I was about the cross the river, the familiar divine sign came to me which, whenever it occurs, holds me back from something I am about to do. I thought I heard a voice coming from this very spot, forbidding me to leave until I made atonement for some offense against the gods.”

(242c) He continues,

In effect, you see, I am a seer, and though I am not particularly good at it, still—like the people who are just barely able to read and write—I am good enough for my own purposes. I recognize my offense clearly now. In fact, the soul too, my friend, is itself a sort of seer; that’s why, almost from the beginning of my speech, I was disturbed by a very uneasy feeling, as Ibycus puts it, that ‘for offending the gods I am honored by men.’ But now I understand exactly what my offense has been. (242c)

\textsuperscript{151} Hegel, \textit{Lectures on the History of Philosophy}, 421.
\textsuperscript{152} Hegel, \textit{Lectures on the History of Philosophy}, 431.
Socrates here identifies his offense as impiety and he atones for this with a prayer to Pan. Here we can see that the absolute is not posited as wholly other, since it can communicate to us (as Pan is “friendly” to the human soul). Socrates recognizes this by positing himself as in communication with it. With Hegel’s interpretation of Pan, we can see this relationship to the external world as reciprocal: Pan is friendly to the human spirit and the human spirit is “friendly,” or able to relate to, what is divine. Both the external world and one’s self are posited as being of the same kind and so, in principle, they are able to communicate.

Not only does Socrates claim he is a seer, he claims that the soul itself is also an interpreter. Socrates it thus not claiming to be special in his capacity to interpret; instead, he suggests that all (who have a soul) have this possibility. It is because he has a soul that he can interpret “divinely.” Thus, Socrates claims that the soul is not different in kind from the Oracle, which can remind us of the transition from Catholicism to Protestantism. In this transition, Hegel locates the recognition that, if it is the case that a priest can communicate with the absolute, then it is also the case that, in principle, I can do this as well. Likewise, Socrates says he is “a seer”, though “not particularly good at it.” He treats the ability to be a seer as a skill that can be acquired because we all in principle have the ability to do what it is that the oracles and seers do.

Socrates thus posits the soul as of the same substance as the divine. This is the case with his daimon, with which he communes with the divine. His daimon has a nature that partakes simultaneously of both god and man. This very point is made thematic and explicit Symposium.

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153 Further, in the “Cratylus” we learn that Pan is associated with logos. He is the son of Hermes, the inventor of language. See “The Prayers of Socrates,” B. Darrell Jackson, p. 28.
154 This was something the Unhappy Consciousness was initially unable to accomplish
155 This is the stance of reason that takes what is to be one’s own (Sein as Seinen).
157 When this is recognized, the difference may only be that the priest is better attuned to the divine.
In the Symposium, Diotima tells Socrates that a daimon “is in between mortal and immortal” (202d). She says, of Eros, “He’s a great spirit [daimon megas], Socrates. Everything spiritual, you see, is in between god and mortal” (202e). They are “messengers who shuttle back and forth” between men and gods (292e). The divine is no longer posited as wholly other; rather, the individual, says Socrates, can see herself as in communion with the divine and thus in communion with the ultimate context of our contingent reality.

Socrates’ daimon is not Socrates himself: it is impersonal. Since Socrates’ daimon is not identified with Socrates himself, Hegel writes that

The Genius [daimon] of Socrates stands midway between the externality of the oracle and the pure inwardness of the mind; it is inward, but it is also presented as a personal genius, separate from human will, and not yet as the wisdom and free will of Socrates himself. The further investigation of this Genius consequently presents to us a form which passes into somnambulism, into this double of consciousness.

Socrates is present to himself as doubled. The locus of “resolve” is not in an external authority, but Socrates also does not identify it with himself. Hegel writes that “The deficiency in the universal, which lies in its indeterminateness, is unsatisfactorily supplied in an individual way, because Socrates’ judgment, as coming from himself, was characterized by the form of an unconscious impulse. The Genius of Socrates is not Socrates himself, not his opinions and conviction, but an oracle which, however, is not external, but is subjective, his oracle.” Thus, for Hegel, Socrates has moved the oracle from external nature to inside of his own subjectivity; nevertheless, it is still a kind of oracle, that is, it remains something other than Socrates himself.

Consequently, one who has an “inner oracle” remains indifferent to the contingency of moral action. Hegel makes this point in the “Religion” section of the Phenomenology, writing,

158 Compare also Cratylus 398c.
159 Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy, 425.
160 Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy, 422.
Just as that wise man of old searched in his own thought for what was good and beautiful, but left it to his ‘daemon’ to know the petty contingent content of what he wanted to know—whether it would be good for him to keep company with this or that person, or good for one of his acquaintances to go on a journey, and similar unimportant things; in the same way the universal consciousness draws knowledge of the contingent from birds, or trees, or the yeasty earth, the vapour from which deprives self-consciousness of its self-possession [Besonnenheit]” (466/§712).

Hegel is referring to Socrates, saying that Socrates used his mind for thinking of things like the good and the beautiful, because these were accessible to thinking; however, Socrates would leave decisions concerning the contingent, empirical world up to the daimon. The “universal consciousness” refers to the cultural community, wherein custom would dictate situations in which the oracle was to be consulted. In both cases, when the contingency is taken as external to one’s decision-making, then, with respect to decisions about concrete moral action, one loses one’s ability to be in Besonnenheit, self-possession, or level-headedness.

This indifference to the element of contingency that is involved when one acts is also shown in the daimon’s negative character. We saw the negative character above in the Phaedrus, when Socrates’ divine sign holds him back from leaving. As Socrates said, “whenever it occurs, it holds me back from something I am about to do” (242c). Further, in the Apology Socrates describes his daimon: “It is a voice, and whenever it speaks it turns me away from something I am about to do, but it never encourages me to do anything” (31d). As negative, it does not provide any positive suggestion for how to engage in the world. It does not supply the content for action. Like the skeptic, who can only act but cannot put forward her own thesis, Socrates’ daimon does not furnish him with the content needed to affirm positive action. This is a stance of indifference to contingency because if the daimon is the ultimate judge and only judges in the negative, it does not treat the positive affirmation of content to be an essential part of itself.
In sum, in Socrates’ relation to his daimon and Hegel’s understanding of it, we see a transition from the oracle. Unlike the individual who turns to the oracle, the individual who turns to her daimon takes on the responsibility, in a sense, for being the interpreter and does not leave this task to another being outside of herself. She has taken on the task of “divining” as an individual act. Nevertheless, relating to the daimon still maintains a stance of indifference towards the contingency of action. The daimon is not connected with the person of Socrates and so, importantly, the decision-making involved in moral action is ultimately not connected to its own resolve.

Conscience

Socrates’ daimon, on Hegel’s account, is a figure that places the responsibility for the interpretation necessary to make a decision within oneself. Socrates understands the need for interpreting the world with respect to the ultimate contingency of our actions and further develops this by positing the soul as able to interpret. Nonetheless, we saw that, according to Hegel’s account of Socrates’s daimon, Socrates does not identify himself with the contingency of his action. The resolve, decisiveness, or determination (Entschlossenheit) is placed outside of himself as the person of Socrates, and into his daimon. As a result, this model for the relationship to contingency still places the resolve outside of the self. The locus of responsibility has not been completely taken on by the self.
Hegel’s discussion of conscience begins with conscience as knower. Conscience is the experience of knowing immediately what must be done in a given circumstance. We can contrast this way of knowing, with deliberation. Conscience could, in setting out to perform some action which it feels it must, set out to know the conditions under which it could successfully act. This, however, would involve an infinite deliberation, and, as Hegel will argue, such deliberation does not take place in the immediacy of conscientious decision. As it involves the immediacy of resolve, Hegel makes it clear that deliberation is not essential to conscientious decisions.

Hegel says that, while life involves a variety of options and possibilities, conscience must decide on one of them, and, “the sifting of them in the steadfast certainty of conscience to ascertain what our duty is, simply does not take place” (418/§635). Conscience does not make deliberation the ultimate concern for ethical action.

Contrasted with the simplicity of pure consciousness, with the absolute other or implicit manifoldness, this reality is a plurality of circumstances which breaks up and spreads out endlessly in all directions, backwards into their conditions, sideways into their connections, forwards into their consequences. The conscientious mind is aware of this nature of the things and of its relation to it, and knows that, in the case in which it acts, it does not possess that full acquaintance with all the attendant circumstances which is required, and that its pretense of conscientiously weighing all the circumstances is vain (422/§642).

This is because Hegel sees an element of contingency within deliberation itself that we could not eliminate.

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161 Conscience “conducts itself foremost as a knower vis-à-vis the actuality of the case in which action is to take place” (421-422/§642).

162 Here, among many places in this section, I am directly opposed to the reading by Moyar in Hegel’s Conscience. For Moyar, conscience “does not refer to a mysterious oracular source of moral truth…” (14). Conscience, for Moyar, is “action on a purpose that I believe is my duty because I believe it is the purpose that is best supported by reasons” (p.12). This seems to contradict Hegel’s repeated claim that though deliberation, at best, may play a role in conscience, it is only one part of the conscientious action. In order to remain within “secular ethics” he stays away from discussions of religion (p.9). Though Moyar does recognize the experience of conscience is what “I believe” to be the best course of action, I think Moyar overestimates the extent to which Hegel thinks that we have a cognitive grasp over ourselves. Doing so, he misses the extent to which, in fact, our experience of conscience is, upon reflection, experienced as “mysterious.”
Any weighing and comparing of duties which might be made here would be tantamount to calculating the advantage accruing the universal form an action. But firstly, the result would be that morality would be made dependent on the necessary contingency of insight, and secondly, it is precisely the essence of conscience to have no tuck with this calculating and weighing of duties, and to make its own decision without reference to any such reasons. (425/§645)

To be dependent on the “contingency of insight” means that if we make deliberation an essential factor, we are leaving moral decisions up to what the person happens to know about the situation and recognize; instead, this stance of morality is characterized by the certainty of one’s conviction.

Later, in the “Religion” section of the Phenomenology, Hegel compares deliberation to consulting an oracle. Here, Hegel is discussing the difference between receiving wisdom from an oracle and from one’s own understanding. He writes,

When an individual, by using his understanding, makes up his mind, and after deliberation chooses what is advantageous for him, this self-determination is based on the specific nature of his particular character. This latter is itself contingent, and therefore knowledge supplied by the understanding as to what is advantageous for the individual is just such a knowledge as that of the oracles or of the ‘lot.’ (466/§712)

First, Hegel again emphasizes the “contingency of insight” involved in deliberation. He takes deliberation to be a finite activity, and, as such, cannot rationally grasp the situation it is involved in fully. Second, there is a real difference between “out-sourcing” one’s deliberation and taking on this task for oneself. For Hegel, one way that this differs is that, as he says, “he who questions the oracle or ‘lot’ thereby expresses the ethical sentiment of indifference to what is contingent” (466/§712). Indifference to contingency is just how Hegel described Socrates’ relation to contingency through his daimon. Individual decision-making, it would seem, at least takes on the responsibility for affirming the necessarily essential relationship one has to contingency in moral
action. Hegel continues, noting that “What is higher than both, however, is not only to make
deliberation the Oracle for a contingent action, but, in addition, to know that this deliberate
action is itself something contingent on account of its connection with the particular aspect of the
action and of its advantageousness” (466/§712). Thus, while deliberation is “higher” than
consulting an oracle, since it does not take an indifferent stance to contingency, what is even
higher is to deliberate with the knowledge that one’s deliberation is ultimately of the same sort of
activity as that of consulting an oracle.

Thus the standpoint of conscience makes decisions based on what it takes to be its own
self. Hegel writes “the acquaintance with, and weighing of, all the circumstances are not
altogether lacking; but they exist only as a moment, as something which is only for others; and
this incomplete knowledge is held by the conscientious mind to be sufficient and complete,
because it is its own knowledge” (422/§642). One’s relationship to deliberation within Hegel’s
standpoint of conscience stands in contrast to a relationship to an oracle and a daimon. By using
oracles or a daimon as moments of one’s moral decision, one has not made a decision based on
what is one’s own. The result is that one stands indifferent to the contingency of action.

However, while the deliberations involved in the decision are one’s own, this moment of
decision-making is ultimately not enough to make a decision. This is because, as we have seen,
we cannot have rational access to all of the circumstances involved. Hegel writes that “this
reality is a plurality of circumstances which breaks up and spreads out endlessly in all directions,
backwards into their conditions, sideways into their connections, forwards in their
consequences” (422/§642). On this account, rational deliberation cannot ultimately decide how
one should act. This means that in order to act, the conscientious individual will not be able to
rely on reason alone.\textsuperscript{163} In Hegel’s conception of conscience, one draws one’s ultimate action from one’s impulses and inclinations (408-409/§622). One must draw upon oneself as a contingent, particular person acting out of a contingent, particular situation. Deliberation may be a moment of the self, but it is not that from which conscience ultimately draws its decisions. Hegel writes, “The sphere of the self into which falls the determinateness as such is the so-called sense-nature; to have a content taken from the immediate certainty of itself means that it has nothing to draw on but sense-nature” (423/§643).\textsuperscript{164} By drawing on its own sensuous self, conscience is able to provide something positive in its action. It is able to supply the determinate content required to make a decision. Hegel writes, “It is as conscience that it first has, in its self-certainty, a content for the previously empty duty, as also for the right and the universal will that were empty of content. And because this self-assurance is at the same time an immediacy, conscience exists” (416/§633). One achieves a positive decision by drawing on one’s own contingent body and character. As Hegel says, “what is positive in the action…belongs to the self” (426/§646). This positive affirmation belongs to the self as a personal individual, and not to the self as an impersonal rational deliberator.

There is certainly a difference between the standpoint of conscience and someone unconcerned with moral matters. Someone who is not concerned with acting well may just

\textsuperscript{163} See also Pippin, who takes Hegel to say that “practical reasoning always involved a responsiveness to social norms; that one deliberated qua “ethical being” (sittliches Wesen), not qua rational agent, full stop.” Pippin, Hegel’s Practical Philosophy, 150. In “Knowledge as a Social Phenomenon,” Sayers argues that taking knowledge to be rooted in the social world does not require us to accept relativism. In “Skepticism and the Unhappy Consciousness” Kinlaw argues that there is a “communal foundation for the ultimate source of rational authority” (214).

\textsuperscript{164} Hegel, again, notes a kind of arbitrariness to the “consultation” of one’s own immediate being. He says that “For conscience, however, self-certainty is the pure, immediate truth; and this truth is thus its immediate certainty of self, conceived as content, i.e. this truth is in general the caprice of the individual, and the contingency of his unconscious natural being [his sense-nature]” (423/§643). Insofar as what provides the content for conscience is its own feeling, conscience is capricious because its moral decision is dependent upon feeling (see 422-424/§643-§644, where Hegel will specify that the content comes from caprice.
follow any arbitrary inclination. While it is true that, ultimately, Hegel will say that conscience must use inclination to be the decisive factor in conscientious action, the conscientious actor has an experience very much opposed to someone acting casually, without a concern for acting well. The difference is that, while a casual actor may do whatever she happens to want to do at the time, the conscientious actor does what she feels that she must do in a particular circumstance. Both positions, it is true, do no rely exclusively on rational deliberation for decision-making; however, the consciousness actor feels the weight of the moral laws, but must also act in accordance with the felt necessity of the situation.

In Chapter Three, I followed Hegel in arguing that our innermost self is elusive. We can see the ways in which our impulses and inclinations follow along this line of thinking. We often take ourselves, our bodies and our minds, to be within the sphere of our own agency. This gives us a sense of a sphere of control (our minds and bodies). However, if we reflect on the experiences we have of ourselves, on what lies within this “inner” sphere, we can see that our sense of ourselves as self-ruling agents is more problematic that it may seems. For example, while we may locate our “inclinations” within our inner selves, the experience we have of them tells us that they are not within our control in any straightforward way. We do not immediately set out to be inclined to desire any given thing; instead, we finds ourselves being inclined in certain ways. What this shows us is that our experience of our inclinations is that of discovery. Inclinations are not, in its most immediate form, something I set out to achieve; instead, inclinations happen to me.

I concluded above that for Hegel, deliberation is ultimately akin to consulting an oracle. It seems that we can also now conclude that, if conscience must draw on inclinations in order to act, it is also akin to consulting an oracle, though this is not simply or purely the experience. The
experience of these inclinations is ambiguous. On the one hand, I experience them as what is most immediately mine, what I am in my most inner self in the sense that these are the conscientious impulses that give me the certainty of who I am. On the other hand, the immediate inclinations affect me. This is in contrast to me, as a rational actor, choosing which impulses to have. If my conscientious self comes to me, or happens to me, then there is a sense in which my most immediate self, my impulses and inclinations, is beyond the simplicity of an immediate self. 165 As a result, having these immediate inclinations prove me with my own self-certainty stands in contrast to the being able to decide purely as a rational agent. The Greeks consulted oracles, and Socrates consulted his daimon because both the oracle and the daimon make it possible to make a decision within recognition that pure rational agency insufficient. Consequently, conscience both in its deliberate moment, and in what it ultimately draws on for its decision, is shares the essential element of the oracle, that of recognizing the limits of one’s rational capacity.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that otherness is revealed within our innermost selves. I argued that our ability to know ourselves is not simply an “epistemological” problem, but is most fundamentally an ontological problem. Knowing one’s innermost self is an ontological problem because it is the nature or being of self-consciousness that makes ultimate self-knowledge

165 Lauer writes that we are not talking about an “isolated individual self, but one whose horizons have been broadened to take in a multiplicity of selves, all mutually recognizing each other as selves and thus constituting the only authentic concretely university self, the community” (256). See A Reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology.
ungraspable. I approached this through two different angles. First, from the perspective of the Unhappy Consciousness, I argued experience of the Unhappy Consciousness is fundamental to the experience of self-consciousness. Second, from the perspective of the oracle, I argued that the form of experience that Hegel takes to be the most concrete and self-certain, conscience, still retains essential features of how one relates to an oracle. I will conclude this chapter by highlighting the development it has made from the first two chapters.

In Chapter Three, I showed how Hegel takes into account the ambiguous condition of subjectivity that was thematized in Chapter One. As we saw in Chapter One, as self-conscious subjectivity I take myself to be more than just the finite ways I present myself. I take myself to be the infinite power of determining. Thus, while we must assert some specific content in our action, it is possible for us to disassociate with this content. Conscience, says Hegel,

acts, it gives being to a specific content; others hold to this being as this Spirit’s truth, and are therein certain of this Spirit; it has declared itself therein what it holds to be duty. But it is free from any specific duty; it is not present at that point where others imagine it actually to be […] What therefore, it places before them it also ‘displaces’ again, or rather has straightaway ‘displaced’ or dissembled. For its actual being is for it not this duty and determinate character it has put forward, but the actuality which it has in the absolute certainty of itself. (427/§648)

Conscience can dissociate itself from the finite character of the action because it identifies as the infinite character of decision, the capacity which has determined this specific content. Thus, while it seems to step forward into actuality and place itself before others, it can decide that it has not done so. Further, others can dissociate the action from the actor as well. Nothing has tied the actor to the action and so others observing the action are not compelled to view the action as a conscientious action. They can be skeptical about the motives of the actor, and so, as the separate the action from the actor, there is no identity between the two. The result of this is that
conscience has not attained any enduring existence because the recognition it might have received from this action is nullified. It would have attained actuality in acknowledgement, as Hegel said of the action, “the action is acknowledged and is therefore actual” (426/§647). However, this is no longer the case because the actor has withdrawn herself from, or has withdrawn her identification with, the action.

In order to attain enduring existence in the action, says Hegel, it must declare itself to be acting conscientiously and assert itself in specific actions. Here Hegel places a priority on language. At this point the actor is separated from her action, both from her perspective and from the perspective of the others. There needs to be something that would connect the actor to her action that would mediate between the two. This is done through language. As Hegel writes, “Language, however, emerges as the middle term, mediating between independent and acknowledged self-consciousness” (428-429/§653). Without this middle term, independent self-conscious identity in action remains unreflective and does not gain enduring existence in the actual world. The self becomes a reflective identity when it can see itself being recognized in a determinate way in the world. Language, says Hegel, “is self-consciousness existing for others” (428/§652). He continues, “Language is the self separating itself from itself, the self which, as the I = I, becomes objective to itself and which in this objectivity likewise sustains itself as this self, coalesces with others, and is their self-consciousness. The self likewise takes itself to be as it is taken to be by others, and this act of taking is precisely existence which has become a self” (428/§652). We can immediately contrast this with the discussion of the “Real Individual” from Chapter Two. The Real Individual is one who takes himself to be whatever he takes himself to be. In contrast, the conscientious actor who has declared herself and has, though language, attached herself to a determinate action, “takes itself to be as it is taken to be by others.” It is
only in this reflective way that the self comes to have actual existence. Thus, since an action gains actual existence as recognized, I exist as the expression of what I am, that is, as the expression of the specific finitude in which I choose to assert myself.

Further, one’s existence in language shows the interpenetration of the “personal” and “impersonal” aspects of oneself. What is personal is made impersonal in the sense that one articulates one’s innermost self in a shared medium, one which one has inherited and not the property of one’s private, inner world. At the same time, the impersonal is made personal in the sense that language, as something existing apart from any given individual, is taken on and made personally meaningful by an individual person. In this way, through one’s commitments in and through language, one begins to participate knowingly in what in Chapter Four will be discussed in terms of “spirit.”

With the need to expressly identify with one’s conscientious action as one’s own conscientious action, we see that Hegel argues that to truly take ownership over the resolve to act, one must resolve to have been the person who did such and such an action. One cannot only find the resolve for action within oneself; one must also express this resolve by attaching in to determinate reality within the intersubjective context of one’s actions. By attaching oneself and committing to being in a certain way, one commits to being understood by others as having been this sort of person, who did this kind of action. One resolves, consequently, not only to do such a thing, but to always have been the person that has made this decision (with these inclinations) and will be judged on the basis of this. For Hegel, it is only in this way that consciousness is truly able to affirm itself positively in its actions.

With Hegel’s figure of conscience, we have seen the experience wherein one does, unlike the stoic, skeptic, or Real Individual, affirm oneself in one’s action; however, this self-
affirmation must recognize its ambiguous condition insofar as its innermost self is ultimately elusive. One consults an oracle because one cannot truly tell oneself, purely as a rational actor, what to do in a given situation. A person’s character, then, is oracular in the sense that, like the oracle, we consult it when we cannot predict the outcome of our decisions from the position of an individual, rational actor, but we must still make decisions on our own. Thus, our innermost self-certainty is “oracular” because we retain the experience of the Unhappy Consciousness insofar as we are always ultimately separated from the experience we can have of ourselves as rational, self-controlling agents. When action is imperative and one cannot decide how one’s actions will play out simply by thinking through rational scenarios, one ultimately consults oneself as an oracle. By identifying this as the true way that one’s innermost self can gain existence in the world, one recognizes the pre-existing fabric of reality within which one must assert oneself. Recognizing that the terms of actual existence require engaging with the contingent aspects of action, one must recognize the inescapability of contingency. Our discussion of both the persistence of Unhappy Consciousness and the oracular nature of our innermost decisions leads us to inquire after the ultimate ground of ourselves. This recognition leads us to Chapter Four, which will consider Hegel’s account of ethical life (Sittlichkeit). I will turn to ethical life in order to properly recognize the results of the previous chapters, in particular this third chapter. While in Chapter Three we found that our innermost self is ultimately in the control of conditions that are beyond our immediate grasp, Chapter Four will address these conditions and try to understand how to take seriously this condition of self-consciousness. In the following chapter we will see some of the ways that our ability to find ourselves existing in the world must recognize the structures of reality that will in certain ways dictate the conditions for our own self-articulation. Specifically, we will look at the ambiguous condition of self-
consciousness, how we are both conscious, self-controlling agents, but also beings who are
driven by unconscious impulses. I will outline some of the sources for these impulses though my
discussion of ethicality, focusing on the role of marriage in Hegel’s text because marriage arises
at a moment when this ambiguous condition of self-consciousness is addressed. Thus, while
Chapter Three showed that our innermost experience in conscience involves the affirmation of
essential parts of ourselves that lie beyond our immediate grasp. In Chapter 4, we will look at an
example of how one can practically affirm this conclusion.
CHAPTER FOUR
The Practice of Self-knowing

Introduction

My main aim in this final chapter is to show that, given the nature of self-knowledge, we have the capacity as knowers to cultivate the conditions under which knowing arises. In Chapter Three, we saw that our innermost sense of ourselves is, ultimately, beyond our immediate grasp as knowers. I made this argument, via Hegel, by arguing that the shape of the Unhappy Consciousness persists throughout the *Phenomenology*. Also, I argued that in conscientious action, what Hegel identifies as the most self-certain shape of spirit, the conscientious agent must appeal to something beyond itself in a way akin to seeking an oracle. Already, in Chapter One, we saw Hegel’s argument for the fact that coming to know oneself as a self requires another. Self-knowing, that is, does not begin as the project of an isolated individual; instead, knowing takes place through the mediation of others. What has emerged through these studies, then, is the idea that self-knowledge is an intersubjective achievement because what is essential to the self is not restricted to the individual person.

Having understood the idea that our self-knowledge is not within our immediate grasp, we can now ask what we are to do with the knowledge of the conditions of knowledge. In other
words, what, given Hegel’s conclusions concerning knowledge, should be the proper practical orientation towards self-knowledge? I will follow Hegel in showing one way to live out of the recognition of these conclusions. I will do this by looking at the practice of marriage as an example of the ways in which we might self-consciously engage in the intersubjective ground of self-knowledge. It should be noted upfront that I am tracing this development in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. I do not claim that marriages tend, in fact, to be philosophically rich environments for self-knowledge. Nor do I claim that marriage can accomplish something that, say, friendship could not. What I do claim, along with Hegel, is that marriage is an example of an ethical institution that has the ability to be responsive to the conditions of knowledge that have been under analysis in the preceding three chapters.

Hegel’s method is phenomenological because, in order to rigorously ground his philosophy, he chooses to begin with a method for an analysis of experience that does not presuppose anything. Consequently, Hegel investigates what we can know through how the world appears to us in its simplest, most immediate form. He takes this to be the simple experience of sensory experience, or sensuous immediacy. Following a phenomenological analysis of experience, he proceeds to analyze progressively more complex forms of experiencing what it is that appears to us. This begins with consciousness, claiming that what appears to us is sense-certainty, perception, and then the understanding and the play of forces. Consciousness then finds that what truly is appearing is itself. Thus, self-consciousness is posited as what really appears. Each form of experiencing what appears recognizes more depth to the appearance, ultimately arriving at the experience of “spirit.” Spirit is the major term under analysis in the book and is the most concrete and developed answer to the question of how the

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166 See Russon’s “The Project of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*” for a more detailed discussion of the phenomenological method, which he describes as “scientific passivity.”
world appears to us. In the beginning of the discussion of spirit, Hegel writes, “Spirit is thereby the self-supporting, absolute, real essence. All the previous shapes of consciousness are abstractions from it” (289/§439). All of the other answers to the question of what is have been abstract. They have failed to grasp the concrete experience of what really is. With spirit, however, we have a concept that is capable of grasping what is found in experiential reality.

This chapter will have three parts. In the first part, I will begin by articulating three “sides” to Hegel’s concept “spirit.” The need for articulating Hegel’s conception of spirit arose at the end of Chapter Two. Chapter Two concerned understanding one’s own or another’s “inner being,” its “mind” or “Geist.” What we found is that the active role we play in listening cannot be removed from our experience of the other’s expression. Also, we saw that, in the conflict between our inner reality and outer manifestation, the outer must be taken as essential to who one is. This outer, consequently, must be accessible, in principle, to all in the intersubjective world. What these observations showed is that, though we may hope to gain access to another’s “true” being from one (rational) perspective, there is a more fundamental “layer” to our interpersonal relations than simply the interplay between two isolated discrete individuals, and, since these interpersonal relations are constitutive of the self, there is a more fundamental “layer” or “fabric” to ourselves. An understanding of spirit, consequently, is essential to understanding the fuller context in which self-knowing takes place. I will proceed by looking at three different “sides” to Hegel’s conception of spirit by analyzing the way that this concept can be drawn from the material from the first three chapters.

One of the lessons learned in Chapters Two and Three is that our experience shows us that, while we feel a sense of ourselves in terms of our explicit control over ourselves and who we are, we are also beholden to realities beyond our control. This shows that self-knowledge
must be responsive to both the explicit and implicit dimensions of ourselves. Hegel’s account of marriage in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* arises as a response to these dimensions. In the second and third parts, I will discuss Hegel’s account of marriage in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and in the *Philosophy of Right*. In the second part, on Hegel’s account of marriage in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, I show how marriage, as an ethical reality, arises out of the need to respond to the explicit and implicit dimensions of our reality, and consequently, of our self-knowing. In the third part, on Hegel’s account of marriage in the *Philosophy of Right*, I look more closely at this ethical institution, specifically the marriage ceremony, to show how it is responsive to the basic conditions for self-knowledge that have been articulated throughout the first three chapters.

_Spirit_

While this chapter will explicitly take up a discussion of spirit, the concept of spirit has been present throughout the first three chapters. In order to develop an account of spirit, I will first turn back to the previous three chapters, in order to see what account of spirit has already implicitly been developing so far. I will briefly analyze these chapters in terms of the conception of spirit that can be found therein. Three basic ideas about spirit will arise out of the material discussed in the first three chapters. An analysis of Chapter One will show that the concept of spirit is present when a kind of an intersubjective unity is enacted. An analysis of Chapter Two will show that spirit is a reality that exists as shareable. Finally, an analysis of Chapter Three will show that within the experience we have of our innermost selves we are directed outside of
ourselves since this experience reveals the extent to which the intersubjective, spiritual world is present in our innermost self.

In Chapter One, we saw that spirit is the achievement of a kind of intersubjective unity. The origin of one’s basic sense of self-consciousness as is portrayed in the *Phenomenology*, I argued, hinged on the bondsman forming a relationship with the lord through his labor. Seeing that the bondsman’s relationship with the lord was the condition for the possibility for the bondsman to relate to himself, we saw how the lord and bondsman had formed a relationship which made possible the bondsman’s development of self-consciousness. This origin of self-consciousness is also the origin of Hegel’s concept of spirit. In his discussion of self-consciousness, Hegel writes that “Because a self-consciousness is the object, the object is just as much an I as it is an object. – The concept of spirit is thereby on hand for us” (127/§177). This new object of experience is an important moment in the development of self-consciousness and spirit. Before the section in the *Phenomenology* called “Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage,” objects of consciousness were the “this” of sensuous certainty, perceptual things, or things existing as plays of forces. Here, the object of consciousness is another self, which is fundamentally different from the objects of consciousness Hegel develops prior to his discussion of self-consciousness. Relating to another self-consciousness, unlike relating to an object of perception, for example, is made possible by self-consciousness seeing itself as a self-conscious being. The self-relation is possible by seeing itself reflected in another and the concept of spirit emerges when a being can thus see or relate to itself
in otherness. Seeing or relating to oneself in otherness allows for a kind of unity to develop between oneself and the other in whom one sees oneself.

Hegel calls self-consciousness, insofar as it is enacted in and through a relation between two beings, a “spiritual unity.” As he prefaces his analysis of the independence and dependence of self-consciousness, Hegel writes that “The elaboration of the concept in this spiritual unity in its doubling presents us with the movement of recognition” (128/§178). This means that the movement of recognition, which is the development of the relationship between the lord and bondsman, is the development of the spiritual unity necessary for self-consciousness. Thus, self-consciousness will occur when a spiritual unity has taken place. This unity is “spiritual” because in it a self-conscious being finds itself in another self-consciousness. Further, this movement is “spiritual” because, insofar as it sees itself as participant in this unity, consciousness begins to experience itself as co-constituting the substantial basis for the actual world.

Self-consciousness must be achieved because the self does not immediately constitute itself. By this I mean self-consciousness, as Hegel understands it, is not a ready-made capacity. We are not immediately self-conscious beings on our own. Instead, self-consciousness is an achievement. I say this because, for Hegel, self-consciousness is something that must be enacted or accomplish by the individual in relation to others. Since the self is formed by establishing a kind of relation with another, a self can constitute itself only by participating in the potential constitution of another. By relating to the other in this way, it can be capable of co-constituting itself. The most basic form of the self, in this case, is constituted in a two-fold way: both by myself and by the other. This is an important moment for the development of spirit in Hegel’s text insofar as consciousness begins to see itself both as constituting the substantial basis for its

167 According to the preface, Hegel’s ultimate goal for the Phenomenology of Spirit is to achieve “pure self-recognition in absolute otherness” (19/§26).
reality and also as the subject of this reality. Thus, the spiritual unity must be achieved in order to exist, it does not immediately present itself in the absence of the interaction of self-conscious beings.

Hegel describes the form of this spiritual unity in the introduction to his chapter on self-consciousness. He describes spirit as “The I that is we and the we that is I” (127/§177). Regarding this phrase, he says that consciousness will “later” experience this aspect of spirit, so we will have to keep in mind that this unity of the I and We is not immediately present. His description of spirit is important here because of the ambiguity of understanding oneself both as an individual and as a group agent. In Hegel’s analysis, as spirit we inhabit the first person singular and plural. Spirit, says Hegel, is “this absolute substance which constitutes the unity of its oppositions in their complete freedom and self-sufficiency, namely, in the oppositions of the various self-consciousnesses existing for themselves” (127/§177). Thus, to experience himself as spirit, the lord would have to experience himself as the unity of the opposing self-consciousnesses, in this case himself and the bondsman. In a superficial way, the lord does have this experience. It was his force that held the bondsman in submission. What connects them is the lord’s power over the bondsman and consequently the lord would experience himself as what unifies the lord and bondsman. The problem, of course, and what prevents this from being a true experience of the spiritual basis of reality, is that the lord does not relate to another self-consciousness as such; instead, he merely relates to an incipient self-consciousness, a self-consciousness (mis-) construed as merely an instrument of utility. As a result, the lord’s experience of spirit is merely the empty shell of spirit, since what he unites is not two self-consciousnesses. Accordingly, what we can see as the observers is that the lord has an “I” that is a “we,” but not a “we” that is “I.”
As observers, we can see that the bondsman initially has a “we” that is “I,” but no “I” that is “we,” because he does not initially have any experience of an “I.” In fact, his ability to achieve self-consciousness hinged on this ambiguity between the “we” and the “I.” Since the bondsman only experienced the personality of the lord, he does not initially experience himself as acting. In his work, he set out to simply enact the lord’s desires as these were the only desires that were recognized. Implicitly, he always only set out to do what “we” are supposed to do. However, he found that in order to enact this “we,” he had to act as an “I”; he had to take on the responsibility for interpretation and action. Thus, he learned that the “we” could only be maintained if he acted as an “I.” He learned that what maintains the unity between himself and the lord is not simply the lord’s threat to him, but also his cooperation with the lord. In this way, we can see that the bondsman begins to become the substance of the unity of self-conscious beings.

While we do see in his discussion of lordship and bondage both a basic experience of a “we that is I” (with the bondsman) and of an “I that is we” (with the lord), consciousness does not have the experience of these together. Each has an experience that is “spiritual” because each, in some sense, constitutes the substantial reality of what makes up and unifies self-conscious beings. The substance that unites the two is the self-conscious recognition each provides to the other (and, through the double-movement of recognition, to itself). However, neither recognizes their spiritual bond because, first and foremost, neither is able to relate to another being that recognizes both its own self-consciousness and that of another. The two sides of the “I that is we” and the “we that is I” are not united.

In Chapter Two, we saw that spirit is what connects us both to the world and to ourselves. Having shown Hegel’s argument for the intersubjective, intimate origin of the self in Chapter One, Chapter Two continued to discuss the problem of how to relate to another, and how to
relate to oneself. I will briefly review the aspects of this material that are essential to a discussion of spirit, and then I will conclude how they can be viewed as contributing to Hegel’s conception of “spirit.”

Reason arises as self-consciousness experiences itself as having lost contact with reality. Through the figure of the bondsman, Hegel shows a form of experience that finds a way to relate to itself as a self. However, this form of experience can become one-sided. While understanding itself as being essential development is a significant experiential insight for consciousness, the proceeding shape of consciousness that Hegel analyzes, Stoicism, does this in a one-sided way (as the Stoic did) and as a result loses contact with the external world. After an analysis of the experience of self-consciousness, Hegel analyzes the experience of “reason,” wherein one recognizes that one can relate to the external world with reason as what mediates between itself and the world. In Hegel’s words, reason is the middle term. Reason, he writes,

is what appears in the syllogisms as the middle term, that is, within the syllogisms in which the extreme terms came on the scene as absolutely held apart from each other. This middle term says to the unchangeable consciousness that the individual has renounced himself, and it says to the individual that the unchangeable consciousness is for it no longer an extreme term but is instead reconciled with it. (157/§231)

In Hegel’s text, we saw that reason constitutes the very ability to know and understand the world outside oneself. Without the ability to relate to the external world through reason, one would remain within the alienated and isolated experience that Hegel calls Unhappy Consciousness. With reason, we have something that can mediate between ourselves and the world. This is possible, because both myself and the world are posited as rational, and, consequently, as in principle able to relate to each other. Hegel’s analysis of Phrenology as an experience follows this general form of experience because the task posited by reason in Hegel’s discussion of “Phrenology” is to figure out how to relate to another person as a person, that is, as something
with an inner life. One cannot relate to the inner directly precisely because it is the inner of an other. Instead, something must mediate between the inner reality of an individual and the external actuality that is accessible to another person. If one is going to relate to another as a person with an inner life, the other must present this inner in something shareable, that is, their inner must appear externally for consciousness to be correct in asserting that it can, in principle, relate to another person.

The possibility of relating to another person in principle hinges on this problem of the inner and the outer. As was shown in Chapter One, another person becomes a self-conscious individual when she develops an inner life of her own. The bondsman achieves this inner life when he finds that he has an ability to choose and decide that is wholly separate from the lord. Until the bondsman has the experience of itself as an actor, he does not have the experience of himself as a self-conscious being. This means that we do not have a self-consciousness until that being has something which is not shared or external. This inner life of a self-conscious being must be her inner life. However, reason posits that this inner life must in principle be able to be made accessible to others. Reason encounters a problem because one can only relate to another person as a person in a mediated way. Another person must then present herself, externally. Phrenology attempts to understand how to identify an external manifestation of the inner life of the other person. In order to relate to another person, one has to give the other something to which it can relate. This means one must articulate oneself. To express oneself means to produce an expression externally. The problem Hegel’s discussion of phrenology takes up is how we take our outer expressions to be expressions of something inner. In other words, the problem is how to understand an identity between an inner intention and an outer articulation.
We saw that in order to establish a relationship with another, one must become something to or with which another can relate.\footnote{See also Merleau-Ponty’s essay “The intertwining – the Chiasm” in \textit{The Visible and the Invisible} as “becoming-touchable”} In order for another to relate to me, we must establish shared terms (or “middle terms” as Hegel would say). This point is also reflected later in Hegel’s chapter on spirit under “Culture and its Realm of Actuality.” Here he writes,

> the \textit{Dasein} of this world, as also the actuality of self-consciousness, rests on the process in which the latter divests itself of its personality, thereby creating its world. Or we may say that self-consciousness is merely a “something”, it has reality (\textit{Realität}) only in so far as it alienates itself from itself; by so doing, it gives itself the character of a universal, and this its universality is its authentication and actuality” (323-324/§488).

This point that, in a sense, self-consciousness is “merely a something” is the conclusion of Hegel’s discussion of phrenology. Phrenology, in the end, declares that “spirit is a bone” (222/§331). This conclusion is the failure or phrenology, but Hegel says that it is also its most significant contribution to the science of the experience of consciousness. This is because phrenology’s articulation of the relation between inner and outer posits that self-consciousness “has reality only insofar as it alienates itself from itself” (323/§487).

Not only must one externalize oneself in order to achieve self-expression, one must also externalize oneself in an understandable way. In order to become something to which others can relate, one must enter into the shared world of actuality (or actual spirit). This shared world must involve, in some way, a set of common terms. If one’s gestures or expressions were completely unique, they would be impossible to recognize in any way; they would not be shared, and, as we saw in Chapter Two, if they are not shared, they ultimately will not count as self-expressions. This means that another cannot relate to me as something absolutely unique. Self-expression found that it could not “simply” express itself, as though it were doing so on a blank canvas. We saw that there is no such thing as a “blank canvas” for self-expression. We saw that self-
expression as a way to establish a relation with another presupposed a more fundamental layer of reality. Self-expression presupposed a medium of recognition, the ability to be understood, or, more specifically, the ability to be something to which others can relate. Most immediately, this is present in language, but more concretely and in line with the development of Hegel’s argument, this is what he calls “spirit.” That the more fundamental ground for expression is spirit is made clear in the beginning of Hegel’s chapter on spirit. Hegel writes “Spirit, being the substance and the universal, self-identical, and abiding essence, is the unmoved solid ground and starting-point for the action of all, and it is their purpose and goal, the in-itself of every self-consciousness expressed in thought. This substance is equally the universal world produced by the action of all and each as their unity and identity, for it is the being-for-self, the self, action” (289/§439). Hegel’s argument shows that self-expression is possible because it is grounded in spirit. Thus, what is presupposed by the self of self-expression is spirit. Someone expressing herself takes herself to be “speaking her mind,” that is, letting another into her mind, and bringing her mind out to be experienceable by another. However, what was presupposed is the more fundamental “mind” in which self-expression takes place, Geist.

The conclusion reason came to when it identified the outer expressions (via body language, bumps on the head, etc.) as the inner, was that spirit was a thing. Focusing on the connection between the inner mind of a person and her outer manifestation, reason here concludes that they can be identified. There is posited a strict identity and coincidence between mind and body. Mind, consequently, can be identified with body. Hegel writes, “When otherwise it is said of spirit that it is, it has a being, it is a thing, an individual actuality, it is not thereby meant that it is something we can see, or take in our hands, or push around and so forth, but that is what is said of it, and what in truth the foregoing has been saying may be expressed in this
way: The *being of spirit is a bone*” (230/§343). Hegel presents this as a failure. What reason has here grasped is “a *spiritless actuality, a mere thing*” (224/§335). It “has spiritlessly grasped cognition as, “The outer is supposed to be an expression of the inner”” (228/§340). Nevertheless, this discussion of physiognomy and phrenology is not simply a failure. Within this erroneous conclusion lies something significant, and, I would argue, true in an enduring way.169

The assertion that “spirit is a bone” is described in the section on “absolute knowing” as “in terms of the concept, the most rich spiritually” (518/§790). The “concept” reason is working with here is the ability to share interiority and personhood, the relatability of oneself to others and the world. Hegel says that “in terms of the concept” the claim about having to appear, being actual, existing in the shared realm, is the “most rich spiritually.” This means that the concept of spirit is more “richly” and essentially about the ability to connect to others, and, more importantly, that it must be done in the shared medium. Thus, the claim that “spirit is a bone” is conceptually “the most rich spiritually” because we have grasped the idea that spirit only exists in the shareable, actual medium of spirit.170 This is how the concept of spirit was present in Chapter Two. We will now look at how this concept can be found in the material from Chapter Three.

In Chapter Three, we saw how one might experience one’s mind as “spiritual”. Hegel shows through his discussion of the Unhappy Consciousness and conscience that the innermost experience of our mind is an experience of something outside of our control. Chapter Three

169 Eric von der Luft explains this by saying, of consciousness, that “Unless it had first passed through the stage of phrenology, this self-consciousness would not have been able to achieve any deep appreciation of the essentially holistic character of spirit, and thus would not have been able to become either rational self-consciousness or spirit” (35). See “The Birth of Spirit for Hegel out of the Travesty of Medicine.” In the first volume of *Hegel’s Ladder*, Harris calls this moment of the book “a great turning point, which we must never lose sight of from here on…The self is a thing, because it is the activity of producing itself as a thing” (602).

170 In terms of Hegel’s explicit development of spirit, this identity of inner and outer happens most clearly in Ethicality, or “true spirit.” Here, no distinction is made between a shape of consciousness and a shape of spirit. I immediately find myself reflected in the world, and other find me there as well.
rediscover what the readers of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* learned through Hegel’s articulation of the origin of self-consciousness seen in Chapter One. In Chapter One, we saw that another person is necessarily present as co-creator of our own interior life. We only gain a sense of ourselves and establish a private space of our own by first engaging with others. Chapter Three focuses on the innermost self of conscience. Here, one finds that within one’s innermost sphere, the private realm of moral self-consciousness, one encounters otherness. This otherness is not another, but is the elusive character of my own self. In other terms, in Chapter One, “we” saw that the substance of self-consciousness was spiritual, that is, intersubjective. In Chapter Three, this lesson is learned from within the experience of self-consciousness itself.

Recognizing the way that what appears in experience is articulated intersubjectively can be understood through the difference between a “shape of consciousness” and a “shape of spirit.” In “What is a Shape of Spirit,” Pinkard highlights Hegel’s move from shapes of consciousness to shapes of spirit. A shape of consciousness is the way one relates to one’s world. It is the individual experience of appearance from the perspective of a conscious being who has her own terms for how to relate to what appears to her. A shape of spirit differs from a shape of consciousness because it is, in Pinkard’s words, the “shape of a world.” A shape of spirit is the way a given world articulates itself. Hegel’s section on spirit is a presentation of one’s experience of what appears more fundamental because for Hegel a shape of consciousness can only fully be understood as a shape of a world. This means that the way in which we individually relate to the world around us as conscious beings is more fundamentally rooted in the way the world in which we participate articulates itself.

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172 Pinkard, “What is a “shape of spirit, 114.
Pinkard argues that in “true spirit”, i.e. the ethical world of Greece, the difference between a shape of consciousness and a shape of spirit is invisible. This means that one does not differentiate between one’s own position and those around one; in other words, one does not take oneself to have just one position among many. If one had to defend why one did such and such an action, one could only speak as Luther did, with “Here I stand, I can do no other.” If Pinkard is right about this invisibility, the beginning and end of Hegel’s chapter on spirit share quite a bit in common. This is because the culmination of spiritual action in conscience and confession still retains this blindness or invisibility to the ethical layer underscoring all of one’s assertions, because, as we saw, in order for a moral agent to affirm something, she cannot do this as an impersonal rational agent; instead, she must affirm an action from out of a mind that is not fully present to her. The difference between these two shapes of spirit is that the latter shape of conscience is aware of its blindness.  

On the face of it, the person acting out of the “true spirit” of ethicality and the one acting from the self-certain spirit of conscience appear to be similar. Antigone and Luther appear to be doing the same thing. What is important for understanding Hegel’s text is to see both what is similar and what is different in these two cases. Both act out of the experience of having immediate knowledge of what is right. Antigone “knows what is right,” not because she has worked through the reasons and has come to the right conclusions, but because in the spiritual shape of ethicality, what is right is taken to be immediately obvious. Luther, if we take him to represent the phenomena of conscience Hegel articulates, also asserts immediately what is obvious. As Hegel emphasizes, Luther does not run through all of the scenarios and reasons for his action; instead, he has the experience of an immediate imperative, from his innermost self, of

173 It is aware of its blindness because confession happens by recognizing the finite one-sidedness of the judging consciousness that is judging it.
what must be done. The difference between the standpoint of Antigone as a figure of ethical life and Luther as a figure of conscience, however, is that in Hegel’s analysis of the experience of conscience, one can become self-conscious of the fact that one cannot comprehensively give rational arguments for one’s actions, whereas in the experience of ethical life this does not happen. With conscience as confession, one recognizes the immediacy of what must be done, but also recognizes the finite nature of its ability to rationally ground its decisions. This is not to say that the experience of ethicality is an experience of the presumption of a rational grounding of one’s experience. The only difference is that, with conscience as confession, one recognizes the limits of the morality of acting out of conscience. For this reason, the confessor will recognize that he must act and recognize the actions of others, from out of the norm of forgiveness. This forgiveness takes place as it recognizes our minds are shapes by factors outside of ourselves.

A shape of spirit is the way one’s mind has already been intimately shaped by the shape one’s world takes. My analysis, through Hegel, of his figure of the Unhappy Consciousness highlights the difference between a shape of consciousness and a shape of spirit because it is the experience of its shape of consciousness (in this case a shape of self-consciousness) being ontologically dependent upon something more fundamental. What is just as fundamental as the ability for self-consciousness to relate to itself, here as the unhappy consciousness, is how it is able to relate to itself. We do not first have a capacity for self-relation and then later this capacity gets formed in a certain way and so our way of relating to ourselves takes on a given character; rather, this capacity for self-relation or self-consciousness is always already given as a specific

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174 Dean Moyar’s *Hegel’s Conscience*, I believe, skips over this point and asserts that conscience is a phenomena which involves giving reasons and making rational arguments. In doing so, I think Moyar remains in the more superficial phenomenon of morality and fails to see the elusive ground of conscience.
way that one can relate to oneself. It was from out of his relationship with the lord that the bondsman developed his capacity to relate to himself. In other words, shapes of spirit precede shapes of consciousness. The Unhappy Consciousness is the experience that consciousness has of not grounding itself. This experience of oneself persists in the experience of conscience and forgiveness because with the experience of conscience, consciousness experiences the self-conscious understanding of its own ultimate groundlessness. Consequently, from Chapter Three we can see that one’s own mind (Geist) is shaped by cultivated by a more fundamental level of reality, which is spirit (Geist). To say my mind is spirit is to argue that before I acquire my own individual mind, I acquire a more general, intersubjective mind, Geist. Hegel’s dialectic of conscientious action shows the way in which in our innermost experience of ourselves as acting out of our own conscience, we experience ourselves as other to ourselves. We experience something other than us within what is most our own. When we recognize that we are fundamentally “spiritual” beings, rooted in the social, intersubjective world, we see that what is most our own is ontologically shared. One’s own mind, accordingly, is not simply one’s own; instead it emerges from a shared state.

We have found that morality, in its most developed form in conscience, cannot ultimately take itself to be self-grounding. While initially it finds itself alone, finding within itself the innermost urge of conscience, this stance of morality finds that it cannot and does not find within its own access to itself the ground of its own being. In other words, while conscience feels that it must take a stand as this individual, it finds that it is never quite acting from the standpoint of simple individuality, nor is it acting in a world of discrete individualities. In the Philosophy of

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175 It is in this way that those who are skeptical of the focus of psychoanalysis on early relationships (i.e. the mother and father) should understand the importance of these relationships. Primary relationships are not just some relationships that affected the way one relates to others; instead, they provided a person with their very ability to relate to others and shows one how to relate to others as such.
Right, Hegel writes, “The sphere of right and that of morality cannot exist independently; they must have the ethical as their support and foundation” (GPR§141 Zusatz). In the terms of Hegel’s Encyclopaedia, morality, as subjective spirit, requires objective spirit for its realization. Not only is it the case that, as we saw in Chapter Three, the ground of conscientious action is Sittlichkeit, but it is also the case that it is only in objective spirit that the aims of morality can be actualized. We see this language of “ground” in Hegel’s discussion of reason as well. Reason is:

the simple spiritual essence which, since at the same time it comes to consciousness, is the real substance into which the earlier forms return as their ground; it is also the real substance because in contrast to this ground, these earlier forms are merely individual moments of its coming to be. They are moments which do indeed tear themselves loose and which appear as shapes on their own, but which in fact only have existence and actuality when they are supported by that ground, and they merely have their truth insofar as they are and remain within its bounds. (234/§349)

While this description of “ground” is found under the concept of “reason,” Hegel makes it clear that this concept makes its appearance in actuality as ethicality. In the paragraph following the one just quoted, he says that

If we start with this aim, which is the concept that has already emerged for us [in its reality] – namely, the recognized self-consciousness which has the certainty of itself in another free self-consciousness and which likewise finds its truth in that free self-consciousness – or, if we single out this still inner spirit as the substance which has already vigorously grown into its existence, then within this concept, the realm of ethical life opens itself up. For ethical life is nothing but the absolute spiritual unity of the essence of those individuals in their self-sufficient actuality. (235/§350)

Ethical life, consequently, is the most concrete ground for our actions. Ethical life is thus an essential component of our actions because it grounds them in a substantial way.

The desires of one’s innermost self, as discussed in Hegel’s account of moral consciousness, can only be realized if they “remain within the bounds” of a given ethos. These provide the objective conditions for the realization of freedom.
It is a present living spirit not merely in that the individual finds his Bestimmung, that is, his universal and individual essence, both expressed in it and present as thinghood, but also in the sense that he himself is this essence and that he has also achieved his destiny. For that reason, the wisest men of antiquity made the claim: *Wisdom and virtue consist in living in conformity with the ethos [Sitten] of one’s people.* (236/§352)

That one’s “individual essence” must be made objective and expressed as “thinghood” was the lesson regarding spirit from Hegel’s discussion of phrenology. In the previous quotation, Hegel articulates how Sittlichkeit provides the ground for an “individual” essence. First, it is here that an individual finds out how he can be concretely determined, through his purpose or destiny (Bestimmung). One finds the possibilities for concrete actualization within the terms of the existing community. There are concrete options for one’s expression, and these options are initially provided and made possible by the intersubjective world wherein one finds oneself always already a participant. Most immediately, the terms for the intelligibility of expression are found in language, a shared medium which must be both personal and impersonal. Language is personal insofar as we find the possibilities for our personal self-expression in language. Language is impersonal because it cannot be private and idiosyncratic if it is going to be a shared, meaningful expression. The individual can express himself in this shape of spirit because it embodies his freedom (and his shape of consciousness) objectively. In the way that self-expression and understanding of another must find itself in external expression, one initially finds one’s “inner” bound up with the shape of spirit one inhabits.

However, writes Hegel, “Reason must depart from this happy fortune, for the life of a free people is merely *in itself or immediately a real ethical life*” (236/§354). According to Hegel, we must depart, or, more precisely, experience will show us that we must leave the immediate world of ethical life, because it is an unreflected conception of reality that does not recognize the role of the individual actor. However, as we saw in Hegel’s discussion of the relation of morality
and ethical life in the *Philosophy of Right*, the stance of the individual moral actor is itself one-sided and requires the ethical world in order to ground it and in order for the moral actor to actualize her actions. We saw that language, as both personal and impersonal, was a spiritual medium in which my self and its necessary expressions must find their home. While we must continue to live out of an experience akin to ethicality, this is no longer the basic concept of ethicality seen in the *Phenomenology*. Recognizing that the ethical world will have to ground our inner moral sentiments, Hegel organizes the *Philosophy of Right* so that his discussion of morality is followed by ethicality because ethicality is found, in a sense, to be more fundamental. Consequently, if we are concerned with the practical conditions under which the knowing of our innermost selves as selves arises, our next step will be to find a form of ethical life that can also recognize the inner imperative of morality to respect one’s own self-conscious self-certainty.

**Marriage in the Phenomenology of Spirit**

In Chapters Two and Three, I concluded that we are never fully self-possessed in our actions because they draw their motivating force and content from an “unconscious” ground, and because their fate, that is, their *Bestimmung* and the meaning their actions will acquire, lies outside of their control.\(^{176}\) This ground is the basic ground of spirit discussed in Hegel’s section on ethicality. We will look at marriage as a form of ethical life that is able to be responsive to these conditions.

One could get the impression from Hegel’s discussion of the ethical world that the concept of marriage as he describes it is something that is no longer relevant to us, not only in

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\(^{176}\) In “Heidegger, Hegel, and Ethnicity: The Ritual Basis of Self-Identity,” Russon connects this necessarily unconscious element of our identity to Heidegger’s analysis of the unreflective life of *Dasein* in *Being and Time*. 
terms of experience, but also historically. This, in part, is because the setting Hegel chooses for his discussion of ethical life is Ancient Greece. This might suggest that the experience of ethicality is something that belongs to another era.\footnote{There are many challenges to Hegel regarding of Antigone. While I take him to be speaking of an experience that is fundamental regardless of the experience we have of ourselves as sexed beings, many do not. See Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, “Hegel’s Antigone,” Kelly Oliver, “Antigone’s Ghost: Undoing Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit,” and Judith Butler, Antigone’s Claim.} In a sense, this is true. Many of us do not simply live in a world of ethicality insofar as it is the experience one has of complete identification with one’s community. Many of us identify as individual persons within a state in a way that does not accord with the immediate identity of oneself with the political community.

Yet, in addition to our distance from the “ethical world,” there is also a sense in which we do have an experience of the ethical world that Hegel is describing.\footnote{Ciavatta, focusing on the brother-sister relationship, writes, “these considerations are in the end independent of whatever historical claims he is making about the Greek world, about Antigone in particular, and about the so-called sexual bases of ethical identity: they pertain, rather, to basic ontological issues that we as spiritual selves all face in our struggle to affirm our own self-identities in the face of an otherwise indifferent natural world.” Spirit, the Family, and the Unconscious, 69.} First off, Hegel’s discussion of the ethical world finds its division between an immediate identification with the family and an immediate identification with the state. Both identifications (described by Hegel through reference respectively to the characters of Antigone and Creon from Sophocles’ tragedy Antigone) are experienced as absolute in the ancient Greek context he describes. Today, we continue to live in both families and cities, and, for example, the family continues to raise us in a way concordant with Hegel’s discussion of the family and what he will call “divine law.” In a discussion of the ethical world in Genesis and Structure, Hyppolite puts this point as follows, “Family and city, which are presented here in an immediate form, cannot disappear from the life of spirit. That these moments do not reappear in the subsequent developments means only that spirit’s becoming aware of itself—true spirit becoming self-certain spirit—no longer needs to
pay particular attention to them.”¹⁷⁹ This speaks to the respective structures of the

*Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Philosophy of Right*. It may initially seem strange that, while

in the *Phenomenology* ethical life comes before morality, and in the *Philosophy of Right* morality

precedes ethical life. We might think that Hegel had changed his mind as to while is more

abstract and which is more fundamental. However, these two structures in fact reveal the basic

ambiguity of experience that Hegel is highlighting, and it is for this reason that I am moving

backwards in the *Phenomenology* as I move forwards in my argument. I take morality to be the

most fundamental shape of consciousness in the *Phenomenology* because it is the experience of

self-certainty, a recognition of the inescapable power of one’s “inner” self, and, at the same time,

a recognition that this power is ultimately not fully one of one’s own powers. The structure is

reversed in the *Philosophy of Right* because we cannot live here. By this I mean that, while the

final stage of Hegel’s development of spirit in the *Phenomenology* is forgiveness, this is not an

experience that can account for the concrete conditions under which we live. Forgiveness is

essentially responsive, and, as I argued with Hegel in Chapter Three, we must also act, put

ourselves forward, even when the ultimate certainty for the goodness of our actions is beyond

our grasp. It is precisely because we must continue to act, and to live out of the experience

captured in conscience and confession, that forgiveness remains the proper response to our

experiences of others. Further, though morality is, in terms of experience, a more refined form of

experiential knowing, we cannot escape the ethical conditions under which this knowing occurs.

Accordingly, I am “returning” to true spirit, Hegel’s name for the ethical world, because, when

we are concerned with the concrete conditions for action, we must recognize that we have never

truly left this kind of experience. This shape of reality persists throughout our experience as modern persons and conscientious actors. The Philosophy of Right recognizes this in its structure.

Hegel describes the world of immediate identification with the ethical world “beautiful” as he finds beauty in the simplicity of the individual’s identification with what is right in one’s community (§440). Nevertheless, even in this beautiful world of immediate identification, we can see that the experience of ourselves is divided from the beginning. The first line of “The ethical world. Human and Divine Law: Man and Woman” is “The simple substance of spirit, as consciousness, is divided” (292/§446). Though a person in this world may not immediately recognize this, for Hegel, one’s experienced holds within it a division. “Substance” is divided insofar as individuals recognizing themselves as a spiritual unity are divided. Hegel says that the individual is divided “as consciousness.” The individual is divided in the way that consciousness is divided. Hegel compares the division within ethical life with the first division consciousness finds in the movement from sense-certainty to perception. While originally in sense-certainty consciousness posited a pure immediacy of its relation to the world, the reflection on experience that allows one to see a logical progression to the experience of perception is the discovery that one was always conscious of discrete things. As Hegel writes, “Just as the consciousness of

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180 Critchley notes that in the Philosophy of Right, “The family occurs therefore immediately after the transition from Moralität and Sittlichkeit…, that is to say, from the abstract diremption of the Good and subjectivity to their unification in the Concept” (199). The Philosophy of Right has practical regarding the establishment of the state. Consequently, unlike the Phenomenology, which has a different aim, ethicality is found to be more fundamental than morality. Though my focus is on the Phenomenology, this chapter focuses on the practical implications of self-knowledge, and, as a result, follows the order of the Philosophy of Right. He writes, further, “The transition from Moralität to Sittlichkeit, from abstract freedom to the actuality of freedom, from Kant to Hegel, hinges upon the passage through the family” (200). See “A Commentary Upon Derrida’s Reading of Hegel in Glas.”

181 This is also the case in Aristotle’s philosophy. The last section of the Nicomachean Ethics (book 10, chapter 13) is a transition into a discussion of politics. This is because for Aristotle, like for Hegel, the concrete living out of one’s life can only truly be realized through a negotiation with the social and political conditions under and through which one truly lives.
abstract sensuous being passes over into perception, so also does the immediate certainty of a real ethical situation” (292/§446). The experiential progression to the experience of perception involves experiencing the ambiguity of the thing as the unity of many properties. The analogy Hegel is making is that the consciousness of what is good and what one should do in an ethical situation moves from the immediacy of knowing what is right to the particular ways an individual can take up the good. Thus, in the way that a shape of consciousness found itself divided between immediate sense-certainty and perception, a concrete person acting within a shape of spirit finds herself divided between the immediate world where she knows what is right and the ambiguous ways that what is good and right find themselves divided in practical concerns.

According to Hegel’s account, there are two main sources of normative authority in the ethical world, and, accordingly, there are two main “essences” that comprise the substance of the spiritual reality found in ethicality. These are human and divine law. Human law is comprised of the conscious ways that a people publicly articulates what is right. It is the “form of actuality that is conscious of itself” and “the known law, and the prevailing custom” (293/§448). Human law is present in the state as the explicit embodiment of what is right. Divine law is comprised of the unconscious norms and understandings people have of themselves. Divine law is present, on Hegel’s account, in the family. It is felt within oneself in an unconscious way. In living out of the “divine law,” we live out what we take to be right and appropriate in a given situation, even if we have never stopped to justify this to ourselves or others. In the world of true spirit, “The whole is a stable equilibrium of all the parts, and each part is a local spirit that does not seek its satisfaction beyond itself; rather, each local spirit possesses its satisfaction within itself because

it is itself in this equilibrium with the whole” (302/§462). This “equilibrium” is *Gleichgewicht*, that is, both the human and divine laws have *equal weight* when making a decision. Both the human and divine laws have absolute authority over the individual.

Not only do these two laws have equal and absolute authority, the human and divine laws are mutually dependent and mutually reinforce one another. As Hegel writes, “We do indeed see it divide itself into two essences and their reality; but their antithesis is rather the authentication of one through the other” (303/§463).

Hegel writes,

The family, as the *unconscious*, still inner notion, stands opposed to its actual, self-conscious existence; as the *element* of the nation’s actual existence, it stands opposed to the nation itself; as the immediate being of the ethical order, it stands over against that order which shapes and maintains itself by working for the universal; the Penates stand opposed to the universal spirit. (294/§450)

This opposition, or the way in which the family stands against the nation, is not an indifferent relationship. Instead, it is through this opposition that the human and divine laws show themselves to be interrelated and interdependent.

The family requires the state for its existence. Parents and children die, but the family relationship has its “enduring basis” [*Bestand*] in the nation [*Volke*] (299/§456). Harris explains this by saying that “Reference to the *Volk* with its public law is necessary here, because it is the legal security of this transition that gives the family its permanently recognized status.”

Hegel says that the “divine law” is one-sided and cannot stand on its own “because the law of the Family is an implicit, inner essence which is not exposed to the daylight of consciousness, but remains an inner feeling and the divine element that is exempt from an existence in the real world” (299/§457). Since the family is situated within and must be responsive to the broader

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sociality reality, it would be abstract to view it as a self-sufficient unit on its own. The “divine” power “has its actual existence on earth” (301/§460). By being made conscious, the “divine law” is put into play and truly made an effective force. Of course what Hegel adds here is that the “force” of human law requires the unconscious power of the divine law in order to enact itself effectively on earth. Nonetheless, it does not have an actual effect in the social world until it is made actual through the world of the human law.

At the same time, the state requires the family as the embodiment of “divine law” for its existence. “Divine law” makes possible the very notion of right. Hegel writes that it is “the inner notion or general possibility of the ethical sphere in general” (293/§450). It is the “force” and “element” of human law (303-304/§463). The family, therefore, represents an immediate potentiality for right, which is actualized in the state. This is shown in Sophocles’ play Antigone. When Antigone acts against the state, she appears to be acting alone. However, it turns out that Antigone is acting from a shape of spirit represented by the divine law, an unconscious understanding held by the people in her world. Despite the fact that the people know what the human law, through the character Creon, has decreed, they feel that Antigone is right.¹⁸⁴ Sophocles represents what Hegel’s calls the unconscious, “divine law” with images of darkness. For example, Haemon says to his father Creon, “But what I can hear, in the dark, are things like these: the city mourns for this girl.”¹⁸⁵ This divine law of the people proves itself to be more powerful than Creon’s law. Sophocles’ play shows that the human law, just like the divine law, is one-sided and cannot stand on its own.

¹⁸⁴ Victoria Burke writes that “while Hegel demonstrates the necessity of the modern transition to explicit norms that can be autonomously endorsed, explicit norms nevertheless depend on a background of unreflective norms for their force” (47). See “From Ethical Substance to Reflection: Hegel’s Antigone.”
¹⁸⁵ Sophocles, Antigone, 208.
Hegel writes that “the conscious [proceeds] from the unconscious” (301/§460). Hegel’s point here seems to involve several claims. First, the claim is that, in fact, explicit human laws arise out of implicitly unconscious “laws” of a given people. Secondly, Hegel claims that a state and its laws require the “divine law” for its “power and authentification” (301/§459). The human law cannot exist effectively without the “divine.” Without the “divine law,” the human law has no inwardly confirming force. Harris says that without the divine law, “Public authority would be mere Gewalt (or violence)—not Kraft, which is the inward Force that utters itself.”¹⁸⁶ One type of law rules from without, while the other rules from within.¹⁸⁷ In other words, the force of law that is essential is not the police force staring each citizen down with the threat of force. If police are required to inhabit every space of the political community, then the community has failed to develop an effective state. Instead, the more important force of law is for the citizens themselves to feel compelled to follow the laws and norms of society. Die Sitte, the custom that forms the basis for ethical life (Sittlichkeit) is the law we find ourselves compelled to follow; its interpretation is human law. Hegel sums this up by saying,

> Neither of the two is by itself absolutely valid; human law proceeds in its living process from the divine, the law valid on earth from that of the nether world, the conscious from the unconscious, mediation from immediacy—and equally returns whence it came. The power [Macht] of the nether world, on the other hand, has its actual existence on earth; through consciousness, it becomes existence and activity (301/§460).¹⁸⁸

This two principles, while distinct, are abstract unless one understands that the existence of each is made possible by the other.

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¹⁸⁸ Hyppolite writes that “the former is already an action, the latter the background against which that actions stands out and from which it emerges,” 336.
Since these two principles require each other in order to exist, there must be a point or points at which they interpenetrate. Hegel writes of the ethical realm that “We do indeed see it divide itself into two essences and their reality; but their antithesis is rather the authentication of one through the other, and where they come into direct contact with each other as real opposites, their middle term and common element is their immediate interpenetration” (303/§463). In order to locate this “middle term,” we first have to look at two other middle terms. In Hegel’s analysis of the Greek world, the figures of “man” and “woman” are, separately, each middle terms for the interpenetration of the human and divine law.\(^{189}\) As a family member, I mediate the divine law, making its existence actual. This mediation is attributed to the woman in Hegel’s account of Ancient Greece. As a citizen, I mediate the state and make its existence actual. This is attributed to the man in Hegel’s account. The interpenetration of them both comes about when both, here man and woman, are united. This union is marriage. The middle term, or the experience of the human and divine together, occurs in marriage.

Since marriage arises out of the union of man and woman, we may wonder if marriage fills the same role in a world with a different sexual division of roles. Hegel’s discussion of “man” and “woman” in the *Phenomenology* is certainly not without its worries. In *Antigone’s Claim*, Butler articulates some of these concerns with respect to Hegel’s use of Antigone and

\(^{189}\) In the *Science of Rights*, Fichte also divides up “man” and “woman” into two principles, but he does so based on a natural relation of sex. In this text, Fichte gives a deduction of marriage through the natural relationship of sex between one man and one woman. His argument aims at showing how “the human race can be led to virtue through nature,” which, he writes, “can be done only by restoring the natural relation between both sexes. Moral education of mankind is possible only from this point” (405). Fichte aims to deduce the virtue of modesty from the female need to be a passive reception of male desire, and the male virtue of “generosity” from the requirement that he recognize that he must not dishonor a woman who must give herself up completely to the man. What is notable here is that, while Hegel continues to divide up the marriage relation between two sexes, he is no longer tying it to natural determinations of sex, but primarily to social roles in the world. This opens the possibility in my analysis to detach any necessity of the social role to a natural determination of sex. Nevertheless, many readers of Hegel do take him to have divided these “principles” into “man” and “woman” in a way that tied each to natural necessity. See Oliver “Antigone’s Ghost: Undoing Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*.”
Weiblichkeit (‘femininity’ or ‘womankind’) in general. Butler raises the concern that by using “woman” to represent the “unconscious” side of reality, what is represented as woman is suppressed, forgotten, and does not receive proper recognition in Hegel’s philosophy. She writes, for example, “If she ‘is’ anything, she is the unconscious of the law, that which is presupposed by public reality but cannot appear within its terms.” Butler argues, correctly, that Antigone is presented as a criminal and transgressor of the public laws. Regarding “womankind,” Hegel does say that they are the “polity’s eternal irony” insofar as “womankind” resists the public order and changes things onto private and individual affairs (312/§474). Womankind, or femininity, represents individuality, and Hegel’s discussion, according to Butler, displays a “hostility toward the individual and toward womankind as a representative of individuality.” While it is true that the sphere of ethical life displays this hostility, I do not think that, in the end, Hegel himself holds this hostility. This is because of the role that individuality ends up playing in Hegel’s text. Butler’s reading is unresponsive to the fact that Hegel ends up taking conscience, the kind of action that seems to characterize Antigone herself, as the most developed form of experience. Thus, while it may be true that the unwritten, divine law is “criminal,” the dialectic of morality shows that one is necessarily “criminal” (hence the need for forgiveness that plays such a large role in the culmination of the Phenomenology). Thus, if Weiblichkeit represents the individual and private sphere, Hegel’s text, far from trying to exclude this part of ourselves, in fact finds this to be an essential recognition of experience.

Hegel articulates his discussion of ethicality in the terms of the historical shapes of consciousness found in Ancient Greece. It was in this society that he found a living example of

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190 Butler, Antigone’s Claim, 39.
191 Butler, Antigone’s Claim, 37.
192 Even the role of a kind of self-conscious declaration is present, as Butler herself acknowledges by writing, “She not only did it, but she had the nerve to say she did it.” Butler, Antigone’s Claim, 34.
the shape of spirit he calls ethical life. This poses some questions to us as readers. First, is this just a description of men and woman in Greece? Can we appeal to our own experience of what he is talking about to take us through the phenomenology, or is this an experience that belongs to another time and place? I take Hegel’s Phenomenology to take the reader through her own experience, from its most basic form to absolute knowing. In this way, the Phenomenology engages the reader in a practical way because we are ourselves implicated in each of his analyses.193 If this reading is correct, one of our main concerns, as it was in the preceding chapters, should be to understand what kind of experience we have that Hegel is referring to here. More specifically, we will need to understand whether or not I as a man will only understand the experience of human law, whether or not the experience of a woman will only give her access to the experience of divine law, or if one’s experience in general can provide access to both.194

In order to understand what more basic experience Hegel might be referring to with his discussion of marriage in the context of Greek ethical life, I think one can begin by looking at the dialectic between lord and bondsman. In this section of the Phenomenology, Hegel shows that we need two people to make this phenomenology work.195 In this, and several other sections, one must have had the relevant experience with another person in order to follow along with Hegel’s phenomenological descriptions. Hegel’s argument concerning the lord and bondsman shows that self-consciousness arises through an engagement with another self-conscious being. The

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193 Russon, for example, claims that connecting the experience of the Phenomenology of Spirit to our own experience is essential to Hegel’s project. See Russon, “The Project of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit.”
194 Shannon Hoff provides a summary and response to feminist critiques of Hegel’s use of Antigone in the Phenomenology. For discussion of this and the role of nature see Hoff, “Restoring Antigone to Ethical Life: Nature, Sexual Difference, and the Law in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit.”
195 McDowell might think this that this can be done within a single consciousness; however, I think this would involve missing one of the most basic requirements of spirit – that it be truly intersubjective. For this other perspective, see McDowell, “The apperceptive I and the empirical self.”
experience being appealed to is precisely the experience of coming out of the isolation of consciousness into a world with others who challenge one’s own isolated perspective on the world. This is not something we can do on our own; rather, there really does need to be an engagement with another being confronted in the (soon to be understood as intersubjective) world. Similarly, with respect to the “marriage” of the human and divine law, while I do not think a marriage between a man and a woman is necessary to go through the experience Hegel is talking about, there is a kind of experience with another being one would have to be familiar with in order to have the experience of the “union” between the human and divine aspects of ethical substance. We have seen the experience of the human law, and the experience of the divine law, but here I am referring to an explicitly created relationship that recognizes its unconscious dimension. I will argue that this experience is not necessarily tied to the union of a man and a woman because the basic experience of ethicality that we might experience today does not necessarily manifest itself as divided between two sexes in the way he is describing. Further, while I will be focusing on how this is accomplished in Hegel’s analysis of marriage, I do not think that conventional marriage is the only way to gain this experience. Instead, I will argue that each of these laws is found within oneself, and, while this might suggest they are already united, I will argue that this union cannot be accomplished alone.

Seyla Benhabib finds merit in Hegel beyond the articulation into sexual difference: “Hegel’s philosophy is significant because the Hegelian problem of the relation between identity and difference that is central to his phenomenology is at the heart of the feminist project to create a free and equal society. That is, Hegel articulates the fundamental problem of contemporary society with which feminists are concerned even though his analysis fails when sexual difference is ‘essentialized’ and all that women represents is confined to the family.” See “On Hegel, Women and Irony,” 84

Edward C. Halper follows the somewhat parallel discussion of the union of man and woman in the Philosophy of Right. He argues that Hegel has logical reasons for separating distinct logical principles into different sexual roles. His understanding is that “Hegel understands the spiritual bond between man and wife in terms of a conceptual bond that united two logical Concepts, Universal and Individual” (838). This unity is possible through the difference that is embodied by the two people entering into the relationship. My argument follows the account of union of the “human and divine law” in the Phenomenology of Spirit and I claim that the difference does
Much like the intersubjective dialectic of recognition, this stage in the *Phenomenology* refers to an intersubjective experience. The main reason the union of marriage he is referring to is an intersubjective achievement is because one cannot realize the concept of spirit, or ethical substance specifically, alone. This is because to recognize something as ethical or spiritual is to recognize oneself as appealing to a world greater than oneself. One cannot make this practical achievement alone.

We can see the two essential foundations of ethicality within ourselves. Insofar as we are beings driven by “divine law,” we find ourselves as rooted in familial communities and live with an implicit understanding of what is right. But at a more fundamental level, what is happening *spiritually* in the “divine law” is the re-claiming of what there is in one’s world as something spiritual. To live with the implicit understanding of the meaning of things in the world is to take the world to be more than simple, natural being and reclaim it as something meaningful to oneself as an embodiment of a group of people.

The basic act that Hegel highlights as essential to the divine law is the burial of the dead as that is portrayed in Sophocles’ *Antigone*. Death occurs as a natural event. It simply happens to someone. It pulls a person out of the spiritual world and the person becomes merely a natural

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thing. In death, the person is affected and incorporated into the natural world as merely a body that can be acted upon. Hyppolite argues that the role of the family is to “rescue death from nature and make of it essentially ‘an action of spirit.’” A funeral is an ethical practice that attempts to reclaims the individual as a spiritual being. It says, “You are not just a piece of indifferent nature, but are a conscious spiritual actor. You are a spiritual being, and, as such, you have enduring reality.” The most basic thing that this divine sense we have in the world does is to take the world to be a spiritual place. Hegel says that “human law proceeds in its living process from the divine” (301/§460) Also, the divine law is the “force” and “element” of human law because divine law involves the basic, inner sense we have that the world we live in is a meaningful, spiritual world (303-304/§463).

While burial is what Hegel finds to be essential to the divine law in Ancient Greece, the re-claiming of nature as spiritual is the basic experience of this aspect of spiritual ethicality in Hegel’s initial discussion of “True Spirit, Ethicality.” Kalkavage describes death as “the final marriage, the solemn act by which the family ‘weds the blood relation to the bosom of the earth, to the elemental imperishable individuality.’ In burial, the loved one is not only spiritualized but also transported.” In this way we can begin to understand why Hegel refers to a marriage as what unites the human and “divine” “laws” to which we are responsive. While the funeral and burial by the family is a way to transform death into a meaningful, spiritual act, the wedding of two people is a way to transform sexual desire into more than simply a biological expression, but

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201 Stafford argues that many feminist interpreters have been wrong to believe that Hegel reduced women to their biological natures. She writes that they falsely assume “that when Hegel refers to the ethical law of the family as ‘unconscious’ he means that the individuals who embody this immediate knowledge are themselves merely natural, unconscious beings, immersed in inarticulate, passive animal life. Antigone is a tragic figure for Hegel precisely because her actions elevate her above unconscious nature, and above even a merely subjective, contingent mode of consciousness to a self-reflective ethical condition of mind” (80, note 63). See “The Feminist Critique of Hegel on Women and the Family.”
a human desire that is re-claimed as a loving union created for the sake of more than the simple satisfaction of desires. While sexual attraction between two people may present itself as biological urge, the betrothal is the promise to reclaim this mere thingly nature of desire into something spiritual.

Insofar as we driven by human law, we find ourselves as citizens and beings who are held to an explicitly interpreted law. We understand this law as a reflection of who we are and in this recognition we abide by it. We belong to a nation and this recognition is binding. With the nation, that to which we are responsible is outside of us. We are a part of it, but it is the group, out there in the world, to which we belong. However, on a more fundamental level, what is happening in the human law is the implicit assertion that what exists is spiritual and is fundamentally cultivated by human action. The human law makes a claim for certain practices and understandings to be taken as right. In our explicit positing of how we view the world, and how we would like to cultivate it, we put forward our own articulation of the structure of the shape of spirit in which we will live. This human law is the positive and creative power that shapes the existing world into something in which one can find one’s own will freely actualized.

Taken together, both of these “laws” have a similar goal, to enact spirit, to make oneself and one’s family more than mere being and into spiritual existence that endures. On the one hand, we do not want things to just happen to us as mere beings (“divine law”). We desire to overcome being a “mere thing,” something simply natural (mere desire, sexual desire). On the

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203 Russon, in “Reading and the Body in Hegel,” writes that “it is the institutions which now define who the participant selves are; precisely what the selves collectively decide to recognize in acknowledging their commitment to mastery and servitude is that something other than their own immediate whims decides their identity,” 329.

204 Halper, in “Hegel’s Family Values” similarly claims that “Marriage is a state of mind. It cannot be identified with any experience or physical object: it is not living together, sharing experiences, having feelings for each other, having children, and certainly not having any common property. Indeed, marriage is an excellent example of a real object constituted by will alone. It could serve as an obvious counterexample to those who would deny the existence of objects of spirit and insist, instead, that only the physical is real” (841).
other hand, we want to participate in human life in such a way that we establish ourselves in a spiritual realm, a world that is created and more than mere being and natural life (human law).

Marriage emerges in Hegel’s Phenomenology as what makes it possible for the two principles to exist as a kind of harmony. With respect to these two principles or “laws,” in marriage, “each preserves and brings forth the other” (303/§463). Marriage is “their immediate union which converts those first two syllogisms into one and the same syllogism, and unites into one process the opposite movements” (304/§463). In order to understand how marriage can unite the two principles that we find within ourselves, we have to show how it is that, although they are both within us, we cannot unite them alone. First, it will help to understand how it is that marriage unites the human and “divine law” through man and woman in Greek ethical life. What is the character of this union? Man and woman are joined together in a marriage. If all that Hegel means with the union of the two laws is that the one law (woman) is living alongside the other (man), it would be hard to imagine how this union involves an essential interpenetration of the human and divine law. But, Hegel argues that a family is not simply a group of indifferent individuals living in the same building. Each member is essentially connected in a family (294/§451). On Hegel’s account, family members are connected like substance and accidents (GPR §145). Each only has its substance in the whole and cannot imagine existing apart from the whole. Thus, according to Hegel, to characterize a familial relationship as a group of indifferent individuals would be as incomprehensible as color existing apart from the colored object.

Instead, the marital act of creating a familial bond with another involves forming a union with another being in order to have such an essential relation, where others are recognized, at least implicitly, as essentially constituting the ethical life that will form the substantial basis out of

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205 See also Ciavatta, Spirit, the Family, and the Unconscious, 91
which one lives. In this relationship, one has chosen the context or sphere of life in which one will live and act. In terms of self-knowledge, in forming such bonds with others, one has chosen the context in which self-knowing will occur. Again, marriage is not the only way in which this might happen. The choosing of friends, as those to whom one is in some sense beholden and responsive, to whom one gives implicit or explicit trust with one’s self-identity and self-knowing, one also has cultivated a space in which this knowing will occur. Hegel’s text highlights this with respect to marriage, showing how this is an institution that can be responsive to the conditions for knowing because marriage creates a familial bond that will serve as an unconscious part of oneself.

These two aspects of ourselves are not aspects that we can take on as individuals. Though we can put forward explicit assertion of what is in a way accordant to Hegel’s discussion of the human law, one cannot gain this recognition from others. Though one can be a part of the unconscious, divine law that others will live out of, one cannot constitute for oneself the unconscious social reality in which one finds oneself. In other words, though we necessarily find ourselves constituted by others, one cannot, on one’s own, be a social reality. One must find oneself within such a social reality that will inevitably constitute a kind of “divine law” that will unconsciously influence how one comes to know oneself. Thus, one could not “unite” these two principles without others because their union is a union of oneself with others. In marriage the two principles unite because each lives with the understanding that it fundamentally exists in relation to the other. Even if the principles are split up between man and woman in Hegel’s analysis, if each recognizes that he or she cannot exist independent from the other, then each recognizes that he or she cannot exist without that which the other embodies. Since others are
required for both the human and “divine law” to truly exist, they do not need to be assigned to either “man” or “woman” in order to require that another is needed for their union.

Marriage is the self-conscious creation of a world where the unconscious divine law will become a part of oneself. It is the enactment of the claim that there is a good that humans create beyond finite individuals but whose substance is wholly created by finite individuals.\(^{206}\) In marriage, the human law, recognizing the weight and importance of the “divine law,” creates, self-consciously, a world where the divine law will, in part, rule. In our discussion of the “divine law,” we saw that it functions spiritually as the reclaiming of what exists as something spiritual. In our discussion of the human law, we saw it as the claiming or reforming of what is given as spirit. Marriage unites the human and divine law and emerges and the claiming and reclaiming of what appears to us in our experience as spiritual.\(^{207}\)

We began this section with a discussion of the unconscious aspects of ourselves and how these remain a part of our actions even when we attempt to be as self-conscious and as transparent to ourselves as possible. We saw that in the world of immediate ethicality, two principles or laws, the human and divine, were present. In the *Phenomenology*, marriage emerged as the unity of these two principles of right to which we are beholden. Marriage was their “middle term,” the meeting ground, or the site for their interaction. While Chapter Three sought out self-conscious goals for the aims of moral action, it found itself also beholden to its own unconscious ethicality. Marriage is shown to be an expression of the truth of this position, that one must recognize the equal weight and importance of each of these aspects of oneself.

\(^{206}\) Concerning the different relationship within the family, Hegel writes, for example, “the relationship of husband and wife is in the first place the one in which one consciousness immediately recognizes itself in another, and in which there is knowledge of this mutual recognition” (298/§456).

\(^{207}\) For more discussion of this characterization of reality, see Russon, *Bearing Witness to Epiphany*, 128.
While marriage does occupy an important role in this respect in the *Phenomenology*, it receives more significant treatment in the *Philosophy of Right*. We will turn to this text to get a better understanding of how marriage accomplishes this union between these two intimate aspects of ourselves: the part of us that we can say and articulate and deliberately choose to be, and the part of us that forms us unconsciously, remaining with out and providing the context and ground from out of which we act.

*Marriage in the Philosophy of Right*[^208]

In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel argues that marriage should be seen primarily as an institution that recognizes love and is not about forming economic or political alliances. When marriage is described in this way, it may seem to be a private affair. In the modern Western world, we generally think that people should marry whomever they wish, that they should not be influenced by others or pressured into getting married, but instead the decision to marry should be the free choice of the individual. This may lead one to posit that a marriage is the business of

[^208]: I do not see an essential difference between Hegel’s account of marriage in the *Phenomenology* and the *Philosophy of Right*. While it is true that marriage is used in its Ancient Greek context in the *Phenomenology* and is understood as a modern institution in the *Philosophy of Right*, both accounts take marriage to essentially be the same thing. I follow Ciavatta, who opposes reading the difference between the two texts to imply that Hegel has a liberal account of the family in the *Philosophy of Right*. In this view, which Ciavatta opposes, the modern, liberal family member enters as an independent person. Ciavatta opposes this view, arguing that in both texts the family is best understood as “pre-personal” because “it is something we necessarily affirm in a prereflective manner, by way of an immediate, affectively grounded experience of intimate familiarity with our particular family members: rather than having our identities as individuals defined independently of the family, such that identifying with our family appears as one among many possible choices that we as individual persons make, the familial self finds itself already identified with its familial others in an immediate, pre-personal way” (93). He makes it clear that, in addition to the family, he is referring to marriage by saying that “for Hegel even marriage involves such a prereflective identification with one’s unique relationship to a particular other, for though marriage partners may voluntarily enter into their relationship as separate persons, what ultimately constitutes the ethical character of marriage is not simply a voluntary, self-conscious act of will—each partner’s independent vow to be loyal to the other—but rather an intimacy and familiarity that comes only by way of the development of an affective, bodily orientation whereby one’s specific relationship to the other self gradually comes to be woven into one’s practical self-identity and into one’s very bodily actuality” (93). Ciavatta, *Spirit, the Family, and the Unconscious*. 
no one except those getting married. The marriage, on this conception, since it is about a free act of love between two individuals, has nothing to do with the state, church, one’s family, or one’s community. These objective realities may initially seem to be external to the marriage. This kind of thinking would lead one to conclude that the marriage ceremony is superfluous, and is therefore a lifeless empty tradition, since everything essential to the marriage takes place apart from what is involved in the ceremony.

In his discussion of marriage, however, Hegel claims that the marriage ceremony is not something superfluous to marriage. In the discussion of spirit at the beginning of this chapter, as a response to the conclusions of earlier chapters regarding the non-self-sufficiency of our individual self, I discussed the ways in which we must be responsive to the external conditions for one’s agency. I will focus on the marriage ceremony in order to show how Hegel thinks that it can serve as a response to these concrete conditions in which we find ourselves. Hegel argues that the ceremony is particularly important. Concerning those who claim marriage is a matter that solely concerns those individuals getting married, Hegel writes, “Although such an opinion claims to impart the highest conception of the freedom, inwardness, and perfection of love, it in fact denies the ethical character of love, that higher suppression and subordination of mere natural drive” (GPR §164). As we also saw in the Phenomenology, for Hegel marriage is not about an immediate feeling. Hegel makes it clear that marriage is not for the satisfaction of an immediate biological urge, nor is it about the fulfillment of sexual desires. If it were simply a relationship for biological expression, it would fail to be an ethical bond. Instead of being just the satisfaction of drives, it is about creating a new piece of ethical and spiritual reality. Accordingly, the ethical character of love will involve more than just a feeling of attraction and affection.
Although he will stress that marriage is not like a contractual agreement in most respects, Hegel claims that marriage is like a contract insofar as “the solemn declaration of consent to the ethical bond of marriage and its recognition [entsprechende Anerkennung] and confirmation by the family and community constitute the formal conclusion [Schließung] and actuality of marriage” (GPR §164). In other words, marriage is like a contract because it too must be created by the declaration of those involved. For the bond of marriage to be created, individual conviction is required and this conviction must be expressed. It is not enough that a person feels the conviction within herself. We saw this requirement to actually express to another one’s certainty in Hegel’s discussion of conscience as well.

In Hegel’s discussion of conscience, we saw that for Hegel, one must declare oneself as acting conscientiously for it to count as a conscientious action. This is how we bind ourselves to finite actions in the intersubjective world. Similarly, in marriage, the declaration, in language, is essential to the act. Hegel writes, “It is accordingly only after this ceremony has first taken place, as the completion of the substantial [aspect of marriage] by means of the sign – i.e. by means of language as the most spiritual existence of the spiritual – that this bond has been ethically constituted” (GPR §164). Language allows us to assert ourselves in the world. We speak, and in speaking we determine ourselves in some finite and particular way. We make a claim, publicly, to being involved in a particular way in some piece of shared reality. Only by declaring it have we made such a claim. In Chapter Two, we saw that in order for one’s self-expression to be recognized by another, one must present oneself in the shareable, external world. Language allows us to exist because we are able to assert an identity between how our subjective, inner will is determined and how we manifest ourselves objectively. Language exists as the objective, intersubjective mutually recognizable element of existence. In his discussion of phrenology and
conscience, Hegel has shown that this is how we exist individually, but this also how we can gain existence as a couple or a group.

Only by declaring oneself and attaching oneself to finite existence does the person speaking, the person spoken to, and the community, know that this person has committed herself in this particular way. Hegel’s *Phenomenology* is an analysis of experiential self-certainty. Consciousness, throughout the text, is attempting to gain certain knowledge of itself. This means matching how it takes itself to be with how it sees itself in objective, external reality. So, why can the person not just feel within herself her conviction for marriage? Why must it be expressed? One answer can be found within Hegel’s critique of the “real individual.” As we saw, the “real individual” thinks that she has immediate epistemological access to what she means, intends, and, consequently, she thinks she has immediate access to what kind of a person she is. Hegel’s critique involved showing how the meaning of a person is not something that can be held within the person, she must express herself in order to have a self. In this way, one learns who one is by expressing oneself. What we see by following the phenomenology is that in order for consciousness to become certain of itself, it has to see itself, objectively, in the way that it takes itself to be. It can do this if it asserts itself in language, because, as Hegel says, language has the unique capacity for carrying the inner into the outer, or determining the inner through the

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209 At this point, one might wonder how common law marriage fits in to this discussion. In common law marriage, one still has, in some sense, chosen to live out of an intersubjective world with another. However, it would seem that for Hegel, without any spoken declaration of one’s decision-making, this would remain inward or implicit, and would not become something that one can have true certainty of. Consequently, one would not have the experience of truly choosing to live with this or these people. As a result, I think Hegel’s worry would be that this would be too much like the immediate shape of ethical life that is described in the *Phenomenology*, and would not incorporate what has been shown throughout his discussion of conscience at the end of his chapter on spirit. Certainly, common law marriage would accomplish much of what I am talking about with respect to self-knowledge, but so would any consistent relationship. What is unique about Hegel’s discourse on marriage is the explicit self-affirmation that leads to cultivating the relationship in a way concordant with the conscious, explicit, and self-aware forms of experience discussed at the end of his chapter on spirit, and not only the unconscious and implicit recognition and knowing that takes place in the immediate ethical life he finds characteristic of the Ancient Greek world.
outer. I do not think this should be taken just to mean that what we have in ourselves is preserved in language and carried outside of us; rather, what Hegel seems to mean is that we discover our inner outside of ourselves, in our expressions. With respect to marriage, I may firmly believe that I am prepared to give myself up to another in order to form a marital bond. However, despite my internal claim to being such and such a person, I can be certain and will know I am capable of marriage when I see myself, in the external world, marrying. In this way, I discover that I am going to marry at the same time as those at the marriage ceremony do. My utterance, as spoken language, is external; I hear myself speaking at the same time as others do. This is one way in which language is the “most spiritual existence of the spiritual” because the community involved in the ceremony is united through mutually recognizing what was said (GPR §164). At this point, one has made the effort to create this bond, though the upholding of it and maintaining of the relationship is not sufficiently accomplished simply by saying that one has made such a promise.

The ceremony enacts or creates a piece of ethical reality. This is possible, at least according to Hegel, because of the nature of language and our relationship to it. Speaking of “our relation to language” may seem problematic because it posits ourselves as realities distinct from language. One might posit language, as the Real Individual does, as the transmission of something already articulated within oneself outward towards others. However, this is not how Hegel speaks of language. Language, as Hegel says again in the Philosophy of Right, “is the most spiritual existence [Dasein] of the spiritual” (GPR §164). On Hegel’s argument, spirit is the

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210 Other relationships can also function in this way. Having created a bond with another, one could come to recognize, through one’s actions, feeling, and desires that one has become “married” in the sense that one has entered into an ethical institution with another. However, it would seem that for Hegel the declaration would be essential for this recognition to gain certainty.
way that we experience ourselves existing most concretely. Thus language, in other words, is how we most concretely exist.

The common, modern marriage ceremony does not portray marriage as a private, individual affair; rather, these ceremonies often exist as the convergence of the family, the state, and often a religious community. These different witnesses are essential because of the essential relation that they play in the creation and maintenance of the marriage. I will briefly highlight ways in which this ceremony does in fact properly recognize important insights concerning the conditions under which a relationship with another is possible. As we saw in Chapter Two, to speak of speaking without speaking of listening is to deal with abstractions. It is the listener who makes possible speaking, and so in order to understand how the marriage ceremony makes possible a marriage, we will have to look to those listening to the vows, those who witness and consent to the marriage.

It is easy to see some basic reason for why the marriage vows would have to be spoken out loud. A marriage is a relationship between two people. The vows involve promises made to each other. These promises make up the formal substantiality of the relationship. They can exist as such a relationship if they are mutually recognized, between the two people. Further, marriage is an activity one participates in with another person. This other person must act as a witness in order for the vow to be a vow because it is essential that this other person recognize this promise. For it to be actually created, it must be created in the way it would actually exist, that is, within an intersubjective, spiritual context.

The activity of the marriage extends beyond the two people involved. The intimacy that occurs in marriage takes place within a larger network of social life that prepares individuals for it, protect it, and sustain its health. Because the family, state, and religion have a stake in
marriage, and, just as much, because the individuals in the marriage often have a stake in their families, states, and religions, one who thinks a marriage ceremony is superfluous is one who thinks the intimacy that takes place in marriage is simply about the solitary act of two individuals. However, if one wants to be married, one wants to carry out the life of married people. While marriage certainly has implications for the individuals entering into it (giving up their personalities), it is a familial, religious, and civic issue because the enactment of this relationship takes place in all of these realms of life.\(^{211}\)

One may take the presence of the state, church, family, and community to be merely external and superfluous. What is important or essential, one might say, is the love each has for the other. Everything else, one might say, is superfluous. However, this fails to recognize the extent to which this relationship will also find itself responding to the world outside of their immediate love. An ethical bond can only take place within spirit and the ethical world. If one wants one’s free activity as a married person to be actualizable in the world then there are objective conditions that must be met in order for me to achieve this freedom.

First, Hegel will claim, one’s family of origin is witness to the marriage as witness to its own dissolution.\(^{212}\) Given that in a family, argues Hegel, we are often related as one substance, in order to become a part of another substance, a mutual recognition of a release from this bond may be required. While the maintaining of ethical bonds in the family required mutual recognition, that is, the familial bonds did not hold coherently unless each side of the bond

\(^{211}\) We can here remember how Hegel argued that the “divine law” and the existence of the family required the human “law” for its existence.

\(^{212}\) See Ciavatta, *Spirit, the Family, and the Unconscious*, 192.
recognized its role, so also the dissolution of the family bond may require mutual recognition.\footnote{This is especially true, since, as Ciavatta argues, “the family has a tendency to assert itself as the dominant and overriding ethical force that ultimately governs the whole of its members’ self-consciousness and experience generally,” Spirit, the Family, and the Unconscious, 69.} The family’s recognition is important to make possible this ethical dissolution. The physical dissolution is clear: when the parents die, the family is dissolved.\footnote{In Hegel’s text, in the period of his analysis, this dissolution more specifically occurs with the death of the father.} The substance of the physical is different from that of the ethical. In the ethical world, recognition is essential. The family’s consent to the marriage amounts to a release from the family as one’s primary substance. Hegel speaks of the newly formed family, saying, “In this family they now have their substantial determination, and in relation to it, their original family recedes in importance as merely their original basis and point of departure, while the abstract category of the kinship group has even fewer rights” (GPR §177). But we must ask how this “receding in importance” takes place. This is not simply the choice of those getting married. The need for the consent of the family shows the extent to which intimate others can have a hold on us. The family may need to consent to giving up one of its “accidents” for the sake of forming another substance. If we are to form another family, we may need to be “released” from this former bond.\footnote{Further, for the institution of marriage to be taken on self-consciously, it cannot have always already been there. One must take part in creating it. This is one reason why Hegel thinks that siblings cannot properly marry (GPR §168).}

Second, the state often plays an essential role in the institution of marriage. When such a long-standing institution is analyzed, it may be difficult to see the role that the state plays in the intimate life of a married couple. This is due, in part, to the fact that the successful enactment of laws to guarantee the free activity of the married couple conceals the ways in which it has been made possible. We have already seen the connection between the state and the family in the interdependence of the human and divine laws. To act freely in the political world involves not
having to stop and justify oneself and one’s relationships. Successful political lawmaking makes possible an implicit trust in one’s environment, a trust that one’s will is capable of finding its expression in the external world. Those who have been denied such a trust, consequently, realize the extent to which the state does play a role in intimate relationships. There is currently a civil rights battle underway in the United States, for example, for the recognition of same-sex marriage. This battle is underway because people recognize that their own intimate relationships cannot be successfully carried out unless the state helps to make this possible. There are many rights associated with being united into a family. These rights serve to make possible the activities essential for a marriage to be an actual marriage.\footnote{An actual marriage would be different, for example, from a marriage of “real individuals” who claim to be married but in no way are able to live the life characteristic of married people.}

Third, there are ways in which what has been said thus far suggest a role that religion may play in the enactment and maintenance of marriage for Hegel. I am not here drawing on Hegel’s philosophy of religion; rather, I only aim to draw on the “religious” aspects of our experience that have been developed thus far. There are two aspects I would like to discuss in regards to the way that “religion” plays a role as witness to the marriage. These are the discussion of the “divine law” and relating to the absolute context in which the marriage will take place. We have already discussed “divine law” as self-consciously recognized in the creation of a marriage. Here, we cultivate the space in which we will be unconsciously known and out of which our own self-understanding will arise. Further, in the \textit{Philosophy of Right}, Hegel discusses the religious character of marriage as the absolute context in which marriage will take place. He identifies the “the religious character of marriage” with piety as a veneration.
of what makes possible the existence of the household (GPR §163, remark). To relate to the ultimate or absolute context for the existence of the household involves forming a relationship to the absolute. In my discussion of the persistence of the Unhappy Consciousness and the oracular nature of conscience, I argued that in Hegel’s most developed and self-certain shape of consciousness, we must open ourselves up to the greater context in which we find ourselves. In this moment, we find that we are not fully self-possessed and must recognize that we are beholden to a context that extends beyond our own agency.

One difference between the witnessing of the absolute and the witnessing of the family or the state is that relating to the absolute is an activity on the part of those speaking. The family and the state can both actively make possible or inhibit the marriage. Relating to the absolute through the ceremony, however, involves those involved adopting the proper attitude towards what lies beyond their own control. This orientation involves an openness to contingency. When each person orients herself towards the absolute context in which the marriage will take place, the couple can come to see the contingent as necessary. We see evidence of this openness to contingency in Hegel’s discussion of arranged marriage and marriage that is completely determined by the individual’s will. He finds arranged marriage to be the more ethical path because it is more concerned with the ethicality of the institution than with finding a place or outlet for the arbitrary desires that one may happen to have at the moment and hopes to have in the future. Relating to marriage as an ethical institution that is more substantial than each of the

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217 We can here recall Hegel’s earlier comment that the Penates, the household deities, both require and affirm the state.

218 In a letter to his fiancée, Hegel describes this as being oriented beyond the particular contingencies of the relationship. He writes that “marriage is essentially a religious bond. To be complete, love requires a still higher moment than that in which it consists merely in and for itself. What perfect satisfaction—i.e., being entirely happy—means can only be completed by religion and the sense of duty; for only therein do all particularizations of the temporal self step aside, particularizations which in actuality could cause trouble” (243). See “Hegel’s Critique of Romantic Love” in *Hegel: The Letters*. 
individuals involved in it makes it open to the contingency of the partners who have ended up together. But we need not only choose the arranged marriage as the one with an openness to contingency. We can see a “religious” relation to one’s own contingency in the unhappy consciousness and its echoes in conscience and confession. Here we can see a way that a marriage should take a “religious” orientation (in addition to the family and the state). To be oriented towards “God” as married people means first to recognize the other as something contingent. Also, being oriented in this way means recognizing that one’s self is dependent on others, and, since it arises substantially out of the other, one’s self will also come about based on their contingency. The religious relation formed is thus a deeper recognition of what was recognized in the unhappy consciousness. The difference is that the “unhappy” character changes because one is able to recognize what makes one’s self as a self is in part one’s own doing. What Hegel’s argument concerning conscience shows is that even our most self-certain convictions find themselves amidst an unknown and ungraspable ground. Thus, the conviction to be with another person and this specific person that is expressed in the vows can be understood in its contingency. It is thus important that the absolute, as the ultimate contingency of the actual world, is a part of the ceremony. It is not that “God” needs to witness the ceremony, but that the couple must recognize the role of the absolute, or the absolute context with which their marriage and family will exist.

219 We can see this openness to contingency in the way that marriage is not like a contract for Hegel. As was said above, it is like a contract insofar as there is a freely given declaration. However, Hegel will say this is a “contract to transcend the standpoint of contracts” (GPR §163). Ciavatta explains this by saying, “They do not experience these relationships, as in the case of contracts, as something whose existence is ‘mediated’ and conditioned by their own independent and conscious choices; and they do not experience them as relations they can simply opt out of whenever they see fit” (100). In a contract, they details and stipulations of the agreement are made clear and explicit. Marriage, in contrast, is not primarily mediated by this explicit arrangement, because, as Ciavatta says, “the substance of this bond is not itself the product of such choice” (103). The relationship transcends the standpoint of contract because this beginning in two independent freely choosing individuals is surpassed as their identities and self-understandings become intertwined.
Finally, for Hegel, in marriage we give ourselves up. Opening ourselves up to this capacity for intimacy means opening ourselves up to transformative change. This is a lesson the bondsman experienced. The bondsman was forced to give himself up, which means all of his particular desires, plans, and ideas about the world needed to be put aside. He accomplished this through fear of the lord (as the fear of death). While both implicitly wanted to receive recognition and be changeable, it was only the bondsman who made himself into something that could be changed. This was the beginning of his achievement of substantial self-consciousness. The bondsman also had to move beyond his immediate desires in order to gain a sense of himself. His “service” was “desire held in check” (135/§195). In both the case of the bondsman and of the person entering into a relationship like marriage, one gives oneself up, in part, to the desires of the other; however, for the slave, this meant giving himself up to the arbitrary will of the master. For the married partner, however, the giving up of the arbitrary particularities should be mutual and not dominated by one and only one personality.

Of course, just because one needs another to know oneself does not mean that we are bound to relations of lords and bondsmen. The relationship between the two beings in Hegel’s discussion of the lord and bondsman was one of force and submission. In Chapter One, I drew out the ways in which this relationship of force and submission was essentially about forming a relationship with another and being determined by another person. This was only implicitly achieved in the experience of the bondsman. In marriage, this should be understood to be the case as each enters into the relationship, as both actor and receiver. Neither person in the marriage becomes the lord, imposing a form or activity on the new individual unity that will be created; instead, each becomes something formable, not only by the other, but even more by the demands of the new reality that is created.
Hegel writes of marriage that

Its objective origin is the free consent of the persons concerned, and in particular their consent to constitute a single person and to give up their natural and individual personalities within this union. In this respect, their union is self-limitation, but since they attain their substantial self-consciousness within it, it is in fact their liberation. (GPR §162)

The bondsman received the substance of his self-consciousness from the lord. He had to give up his own individual personality in order to first have the experience of self-consciousness. In marriage, we are already dealing with self-conscious beings. We may be tempted to think that once we have achieved personhood, the ontological status of our personhood is no longer as it was for the lord and the bondsman. Although we needed another to become who we are, we might think that after this is accomplished we can proceed on our own. However, this is a condition that persists according to Hegel. Hegel’s argument in the dialectic of recognition not only showed that we require another to become a person, it was also the beginning of an argument for why personhood as such needs others to sustain it.

Consequently, the decision to join together in union with another person does not produce an exceptional set of circumstances insofar as one is being shaped by another. In the above quotation from the Philosophy of Right, Hegel argues that self-limitation is the condition under which those marrying become free. Limitation is the very condition for freedom. It is true that one cannot engage in any way one feels if one has accepted the limits of a relationship. However, in accordance with Hegel’s argument for the fact that we must actualize ourselves within the terms of the already existing external actuality, it is just as true that one cannot self-consciously engage in any way unless one has accepted the limits of some kind of relationship.

This is different from the expression of conscience because, whereas in conscience I assert myself to be as I find myself and in the way that I am certain I must be (and accordingly
must act), in the expression of marriage, I will myself to be other than I currently am. Mutual forgiveness is the mutual recognition of each other’s irreducible particular individuality, whereas marriage is mutual surrender of oneself. Moral conscience is the eigensinnig experience of oneself, whereas marriage gives up, or expands, the eigen-sinnig nature for an unser-sinnig self, where one’s innermost will is recognized as not simply one’s own.\textsuperscript{220} In morality, one finds one’s innermost will to have a sense of alterity; in marriage one asserts and chooses the alterity that will determine oneself and in which one’s will will be embodied. Marriage, consequently, can embody and make objective the stance of forgiveness. This recognition acknowledges that each are finite, imperfect beings and thus each need not stubbornly (in an “eigensinnig” way) hold onto their “individual” identities as though they were perfect and finished. Marriage, consequently, can involve the stance of a mutual forgiveness. Marriage is one possible ethical institution in which one can exist as living out of the recognition of Hegel’s analysis of forgiveness both towards oneself and towards another.

This speaks to an important concern with respect to what is gained in the kind of marriage Hegel discusses. Do we, by the very fact of becoming married, or entering into a chosen, mutually constituting relationship, come to be better capable of knowing ourselves? There is a very simple sense in which we might take this to be the case. My argument from the beginning has been that it is through others that we are able to know ourselves. Consequently, being around others, especially those with a greater hermeneutical capacity with respect to their

\textsuperscript{220} In Hegel’s terminology, one’s “I” is recognized as, in part, a “we.” This stands in contrast to the initial standpoint of consciousness that described through the figure of the bondsman. Writing about the self-consciousness of the bondsman, Gadamer writes that “We can also say that in the individual point of its self-certain self, its true essence as spirit and reason is not yet recognized” (56).
ability to know the other, would make self-knowledge possible. This, however, is no guarantee. The fact of being around others speaks to the possibility of knowing ourselves, but it says nothing about knowing well or poorly. The bondsman, for example, relates to the lord, but we would call this a bad context for self-knowing because the bondsman, at least initially, is misrecognized as a thing and less than a person such that he takes this to be the case. I highlight Hegel’s analysis of marriage as responsive to the greater conditions in which knowing occurs, and an institution that is capable of living out of the insight of forgiveness, because he shows how this is an existing institution that can be responsive to the conditions for knowing articulated in some form in my first three chapters.

A major difference between the bondsman and those married is that the bondsman did not choose how and by whom he would be shaped. He was forced into an unequal relationship by the lord. Partners in a marriage, on the other hand, choose to create a space in which they will be shaped and will find their substantial existence in an other. They are able to participate in the very conditions under which they will develop their identities and gain a sense of who they are. When establishing ways of being and being determined, like in our example of marriage, we are able to take on the task of determining how we are determined because this is a relationship that is explicitly created for this purpose. So, while the bondsman, from his standpoint, accidentally gained self-consciousness, from the standpoint of marriage, one can self-consciously gain substantial self-consciousness and participate in the way one’s self is formed. In this way, one

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221 I do not take it for granted that a partner in a marriage has a greater ability to interpret and understand the other. Since intimate relationships involve the intertwining of the personality of each, each person will have much to gain and lose when considering what they think of the other. As a result, there would be many roadblocks to being able to be a good knower of the other. One might think that a friend or therapist, at this point, would serve as a better knower. This may be true, but the particularities of these relationships are also not without their problems. There is much to be said about the issue of who would be the best partner for self-knowing. My aim here is only to argue that one should concern oneself with who these partners in knowing are.
gains a higher sense of freedom because one is able to affect and be a part of the conditions under which and from out of which one’s free activity is possible.

What is essential to Hegel’s account of marriage in the *Phenomenology* is that it shows a way in which people can have the experience of *self-consciously* uniting the aspects of our experience that he describes in the terms “human and divine law.” I focused on Hegel’s discussion of marriage in the *Philosophy of Right* insofar as it is an ethical institution that is capable of recognizing both the ways in which we live consciously and unconsciously, as well as the extent to which a relationship relies on more than just those involved for its existence. The marriage ceremony is an example of a way in which we can self-consciously participate in creating an ethical institution that is capable of recognizing the intersubjective dimensions to ourselves.

**Conclusion**

In the first three chapters, I argued, following Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, that self-knowledge is an intersubjective phenomenon. In order to do this, I focused on sections of the *Phenomenology* that concentrate on the nature of the self and our access to it. We saw, first, that the “self” only arises out of an intersubjective engagement with others. This structure is retained when we are concerned with our access to ourselves. We do not have immediate access to ourselves; instead, we need others to participate in the knowing that we are engaged in with self-knowledge. This knowing, further, is not incidental to the self. For Hegel, the self is precisely its self-relation. How we relate to ourselves is constitutive of what the self is. Since others make possible and participate in how we relate to ourselves, the selfhood and self-knowledge are co-
created through our relations with others. This is a practical endeavor as self-knowledge is an
achievement through and with others.

Keeping in mind the intersubjective and practical nature of self-knowledge, this fourth
chapter was concerned with how we would better engage as knowers given this structure of self-
knowing. I argued that when we recognize that self-knowledge arises in this way, we will take
seriously the ways in which we cultivate and participate in these social and intersubjective
dimensions of our lives.

The forms of experience studied in the first three chapters portrayed the intersubjective
character of self-knowing as threatening, irrelevant, or defective. Chapter One, on the
independence and dependence of self-consciousness, took this condition to be threatening. The
basic claim of self-consciousness was that it was free of any dependency on finitude. In order to
remain consistent with this claim, it took the presence of another to threaten its ability to be
independent. In Chapter Two, the figure of the Real Individual attempted to ignore this condition
for self-knowledge, but, attending to its experience, we could see the defect in this position. In
Chapter Three, the figure of the Unhappy Consciousness takes this dependence on the
intersubjective condition for self-knowledge to be a defect. It feels a lack within itself and is
“unhappy” because of its non-self-sufficiency. However, what was experienced as a threatening,
irrelevant, or defective in the first three chapters was, in Chapter Four, takes seriously and
understood as the basic condition of self-knowing and selfhood. Instead of responding to this
condition by taking it to be a problem, we see in Chapter Four that we can affirm this
intersubjective condition.

In Chapter Three I argued that the ground for our knowing is found in ethical life. This
ground is elusive and Hegel argues that in some sense we will always inhabit the space of
unconscious, “divine law” that he found characteristic of the family in Ancient Greece. Since this social fabric always grounds our behavior, I argued that it is by transforming ethical reality that one can truly take on the task of forming oneself. This is where we become self-conscious in our relation to ourselves. But this means that in order for us to be self-conscious in this way, ethical reality must be cultivated in such a way as to be responsive to the requirements for self-knowledge and self-identity. Hegel’s example of marriage holds such a possibility. In creating this institution, we can create an ethical reality that is responsive to the dimensions of ourselves that are both within and without of our control. Marriage emerges in Hegel’s text responsive to these realities because it is one of the existing ethical institutions that has the possibility to recognize the inherently intersubjective character of our lived reality.
In his letter “Crowds,” Seneca, the Roman stoic philosopher, discusses how we are vulnerable to taking on the character of other people. He says, “I shall admit my own weakness, at any rate; for I never bring back home the same character that I took abroad with me.”

Seneca explains that when he spends time in crowd, he finds that they influence him and change the way he relates to himself. Seneca presents this as a warning and suggests that we be wary of crowds, lest we become different people because of the influence of the crowd.

This weakness is not particular to Seneca. Hegel’s analysis of experience shows that this weakness is a part of our condition. This is part of our condition because the structure of self-knowledge is such that we require others to help us know ourselves. Chapters One and Two showed this structure of self-knowledge, arguing that self-knowledge is necessarily intersubjective and thus our knowledge of ourselves is necessarily dependent on others. Since self-knowledge is constitutive of the self, our knowing and the being of who we are is dependent on the intersubjective, or “spiritual,” context in which this knowing arises.

We do not fully ground and constitute ourselves, beginning with our inception as self-conscious beings. This was shown, beginning in Chapter One with the origin of self-consciousness and then more fully in Chapter Three with my discussion of conscience as

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222 Seneca, The Stoics Philosophy of Seneca, 172.
Unhappy Consciousness and the oracular nature of human action. The goal of my analysis has been to articulate this condition with respect to self-knowledge and show how one might take this condition seriously. We could, in response to the affect that others have on our ability to know and constitute ourselves, withdraw from the crowd, as Seneca might suggest. We could retreat in the hopes that we would not become dependent on others or be harmed by them. However, Hegel has shown that this response is not possible.

The figures in Hegel’s Phenomenology of the stoic, the real individual, the beautiful soul, and the judging consciousness display a one-sided and unreflective account of self-knowledge. Hegel critiques these figures in order to show that it is only by engaging with others that we gain actuality as being and certainty of ourselves as knowers. Consequently, retreating from others is not a possible response. Instead, knowing that it is through participation in the social world that we gain a sense of ourselves, Hegel’s philosophy articulates ways in which we might enter into the world of “spirit.” We can, Hegel shows, take part in transforming social reality by participating in creating the very ethical institutions to which we will find ourselves beholden. It is in this way that we can self-consciously recognize the ethical beings that we necessarily find ourselves being.

Thus, understanding the conditions under which knowledge takes place has practical implications. In Chapter Four, I argued that one response to recognizing the conditions under which knowing takes place can be found in Hegel’s discussion of the institution of marriage in the Phenomenology of Spirit and the Philosophy of Right. Recognizing that knowing will take place in an intersubjective context, we can take on the task of cultivating the context in which this knowing will arise. This knowing, as we have noted, will in part take place unconsciously. Given the conditions for knowing articulated in Hegel’s discussion of conscience, confession,
and forgiveness, we can see that we will not be able to make ourselves fully present to ourselves. Yet, what we are capable of doing to some extent is choosing and transforming the space in which this unconscious knowing will take place. What is essential to marriage, as Hegel has argued, is to create an institution that is greater than oneself.

Hegel’s concept of forgiveness, as I have noted, articulates the form of knowing which recognizes the finitude of human knowing. Living out of this recognition as a knower is responsive to the inadequacy which isolated, individual knowers have with respect to themselves and the world around them; yet, at the same time, it recognizes the imperative to act and participate in social reality. Living out of the norm of forgiveness means living out the recognition of both of these insights. Consequently, forgiveness, as a stance of knowing, will take the finitude and broad context of human knowing seriously and, insofar as one is concerned with knowing oneself, one will seek to engage the broader conditions which make this knowing possible.
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